



By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

In the first five games of the season, the Ohio State football team's defense looked like it could do anything it wanted to.

When Texas came to Columbus for the season opener, the Buckeyes were able to confuse inexperienced starting quarterback Arch Manning with all kinds of disguised coverages he hadn't seen before.

They followed that with a shutout of Grambling State before holding rushing quarterbacks Parker Navarro and Demond Williams Jr. to a combined minus-25 rushing yards in the next two games. Then against Minnesota, the Buckeyes were dominant in every phase of the game, holding the Golden Gophers to a total of three points on an opening-drive field goal.

The only thing they weren't excelling in was creating turnovers and getting the ball back for the offense in good field position. Ohio State came into Champaign, Ill., on Oct. 11 with three fumble recoveries and two interceptions as a defense.

Junior cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. had one of those picks in the Buckeyes' 14-7 win over Texas on Aug. 30, but he knew that the team's turnover margin of five to four wasn't good enough for what the defense expects out of itself.

But against the Illini, Ohio State forced three turnovers, getting the offense into great field position time and time again, which it took advantage of each time with three touchdowns on the ensuing drives.

"We emphasize getting the ball back for the offense every week," Mathews said after the Buckeyes took down No. 17 Illinois 34-16 on Oct. 11. "We really haven't been doing that too well the last couple of weeks, so I think mission accomplished."

Mathews forced two of those turnovers. In the first quarter, Illinois was able to gain a first down on its first offensive drive of the game. But down to third-and-5 from their own 43-yard line, the Fighting Illini faltered.

Usually careful veteran quarterback Luke Altmyer dropped back to try to look for a first down and targeted receiver Hank Beatty on a slant up the middle right at the first-down marker. But Mathews was able to stay with the route and wrap his left arm around the receiver to bat the pass away and into the air for linebacker Payton Pierce to



SONNY BROCKWAY

**MY TURN — Junior cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. (7) spent the afternoon of Oct. 11 harassing Illinois quarterback Luke Altmyer during Ohio State's 34-16 victory. Mathews' pass breakup led to an interception by Payton Pierce, and later he forced an Altmyer fumble that Caden Curry recovered. The Buckeyes scored 21 points off three turnovers.**

snatch it and take it back 15 yards to the Illinois 35-yard line.

It was Altmyer's first interception of the season, which the ever-confident Mathews said he was expecting to happen going into the contest.

"I knew he was going to throw one on

us," Mathews said. "This defense is crazy, isn't it? This defense is crazy."

The Buckeye offense made good use of the short field position and took just 3:15 of game time to get CJ Donaldson into the end zone for his fifth rushing touchdown of the season.

Mathews said he was ready for the route because of the preparation he did leading up to the game, knowing that Altmyer liked to throw it over the middle to receivers breaking in, knowing he had to be quick to the ball to take the receiver out of the play.

"I knew they liked a lot of inbreaking routes, so I was just trying to take that away early, which I think I did," Mathews said. "Payton made a great play going to get that ball."

The next turnover came in the second

quarter immediately after Illinois had gotten the ball back following a 31-yard field goal by Jayden Fielding.

Altmyer handed the ball off to sophomore running back Ca'Lil Valentine, who was met at the line of scrimmage by multiple Buckeyes. But it was nose tackle Kayden McDonald who got to Valentine early enough to get his arms around the wrapped-up football and use his strength advantage to pull it away from the running back.

"The running backs, they're little guys," McDonald said of the strip. "I'm a big guy, so I can take it away. Once I got the opportunity, I just took it."

McDonald said that going into this week,

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# FAN FORUM

## Buckeye Leaves

*Ohio State continued its dominant run with a 34-16 win over No. 17 Illinois on Oct. 11, forcing three turnovers along the way. 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:** For his two-touchdown performance against Illinois, my Buckeye Leaf is going to running back CJ Donaldson Jr. The senior back led Ohio State with 13 carries, rushing for 44 yards and the two scores.

Donaldson's first touchdown, a 1-yard rush late in the first quarter, extended the Buckeyes' lead to 10-0 and kick-started a run that saw Ohio State score 20 unanswered points to begin the game. Illinois scored a touchdown on its first drive of the second half, though Ohio State quickly answered with a 14-play, 63-yard drive capped off by a 2-yard touchdown rush for Donaldson's second score of the afternoon.

**Bobby Gorbett, BSB:** My Buckeye Leaf is going to junior cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. Mathews was a part of the Buckeyes limiting a solid Illinois passing attack to just 248 yards on the day, and he played a big role in the team forcing three turnovers.

Mathews made his first impact play of the game in the first quarter when Illinois quarterback Luke Altmyer looked for star receiver Hank Beatty. Mathews had good coverage on Beatty and tipped the ball into the air. Linebacker Payton Pierce was in the right place at the right time and came up with the interception.

Then in the third quarter, Mathews made an impact as a blitz. On a second-and-10 play with Illinois having the ball at its own 30, Mathews got a free hit on Altmyer and stripped the ball out of his grasp. Defensive end Caden Curry picked up the ball to complete Mathews' big play.

Mathews, who spent a lot of his time at nickel in place of the injured Lorenzo Styles Jr., was solid in coverage all day. The fact that Mathews finished the game with only one tackle indicates he didn't give Altmyer many chances to target him in coverage.

**Greg Wilson, BSB:** I'm going with Caleb Downs for my Buckeye Leaf. He is extremely important to the Ohio State defense both on and off the ball, but he was on the ball a lot in the win over Illinois.

He finished the game with nine tackles (seven solo), and it's almost surprising that one of the three turnovers created by the Buckeyes didn't come because of how violently he was

hitting some of the Illini ball carriers.

### BSB Subscribers

**Tiffin Buckeye:** Caleb Downs.

**Bob Cody:** On offense, Buckeye Leaves were earned by Jeremiah Smith, Bo Jackson, CJ Donaldson, Julian Sayin, Max Klare and Jayden Fielding. On defense, Buckeye Leaves for Jaylen McClain, Payton Pierce, Tywone Malone, Kayden McDonald, Caden Curry, Kenyatta Jackson, Jermaine Mathews and Caleb Downs.

**PeyoteBuck:** At this point in the season, it seems as though we are taking the precision pelting of Sayin for granted. Give him a leaf. Tate, Donaldson, Bo and Downs, too. They all kept the team working.

**John Lanning:** I really like this defense. Every man is doing his job, and because of that, good things are happening. Leaves to the defense. I would give leaves to Sayin, Jackson, and Devin Sanchez. Excellent play for young starters. Great methodical executions both sides of the ball.

**BuckeyeScott:** Give one to Kayden McDonald for ripping the ball away from the Illinois running back. That man is a beast!



**Indiana went into Eugene, Ore., and took down No. 3 Oregon, 30-20, on Oct. 11, keeping its undefeated 6-0 record with a 3-0 mark in the Big Ten. We asked subscribers on the BSB Fan Forum if they think the Hoosiers and head coach Curt Cignetti are the real deal this season and are a threat to challenge Ohio State for the Big Ten. Here are some of the responses:**

"Whether they're the real deal this year, I don't know. They could be a threat to Ohio State this year, but I regard them, so far, as probably about the fourth-best team in the B1G."

– **Terrier Buck**

"I don't think they have the athletes to beat Ohio State head-to-head. That being said, they're 100 percent legit and have a very good team, and I'm extremely impressed by them. Anyone who still thinks they ain't legit just doesn't know football. They play hard for the coach, and the coach has swagger and

is a great leader. I'm happy for them."

– **Tiffin Buckeye**

"Indiana is certainly a team to be taken very seriously. They are a threat to win the B1G until they are not a threat. Playing the Hoosiers in Indianapolis that first week in December would be a difficult out!"

– **BuckeyeScott**

"Indiana is legit. The defense is tough and swarming. Get to the ball. If you stop the opponent's offense, you are in every game. Adding to the strong defense, Indiana's offense

is led by an agile, accurate quarterback (Fernando Mendoza) with confidence. They play to win. Cignetti's confidence, arrogance maybe, has rubbed off on this team. This is a much better team than last year. They are not a pushover."

– **John Lanning**

"I'm happy to see the Hoosiers having success this season. We need to take that team seriously. As to how far they will go? I don't know. We will find out."

– **PeyoteBuck**

"Indiana is legit. Cignetti

has brought in athletes and coaches in basically a two-year span that have turned this program around. He (Cignetti) always has a good scheme for each of his opponents. They would give Ohio State all it could handle. Google it!"

– **R1TBDBITL**

"I'm impressed with what Cignetti has done to make Indiana a football power. Having beaten Oregon in Eugene, they're certainly a threat, but they do have potential pitfalls left on their schedule. Stay tuned!"

– **Bob Cody**

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No. 3	Sept. 27	No. 15	TBA
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No. 5	Oct. 11	No. 17	March 7
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# OSU Tallies Another Never-In-Doubt Win

Be honest. At any time during top-ranked Ohio State's 34-16 road win against No. 17 Illinois on Oct. 11, were you the least bit worried about the outcome?

Make no mistake. The Fighting Illini are a good team. Maybe not the 17th-best team in college football, but a good team nevertheless. They won 10 games last year for the first time since 2001, and a favorable schedule suggests they might hit double digits in victories again this season.

In terms of talent, however, they simply are not in Ohio State's league, and that's not their fault.

Illinois head coach Bret Bielema tried just about everything he could to bridge his team's talent gap with the Buckeyes. He instructed his defensive players to drag their feet while substituting, forcing at least one Ohio State timeout, and he occasionally reached into his bag of tricks to keep his opponents off-guard. The fourth-and-goal call for a handoff into an option pitch that got Illinois its first touchdown was masterful.

That particular score cut Ohio State's lead to 20-10 with 10:06 left in the third quarter and gave the home team renewed hope. But then the Buckeyes responded with something equally masterful although a little more workmanlike. With the Memorial Stadium crowd of 60,670 suddenly regaining its pre-kickoff voice, Ohio State possessed the ball for nearly eight minutes, moving 63 yards in 14 plays to push its lead back to 17 points at 27-10 with 2:08 remaining in the third period.

For a team that has built its reputation on striking at the speed of lightning, I thought that methodical drive was a backbreaker for Illinois.

Ryan Day typically talks about winning the four final minutes of the first half and first four minutes of the second half, but the Illini had turned the tables on that strategy with a field goal at the 1:05 mark of the second quarter and a touchdown off the second-half kickoff to erase half of their 20-point deficit.

Additionally, Illinois had pierced the red-zone invincibility of the OSU defense with a rushing touchdown that capped a 12-play, 75-yard drive. To that point, Illinois had 181 total yards to 182 for Ohio State, and Illinois QB Luke Altmyer had thrown for 134 yards while OSU quarterback Julian Sayin had totaled 117.

In other words, what had been a burgeoning blowout was turning into a close game. Except no one informed the Buckeyes about that. They simply opened their briefcases and went back to work with a sustained drive that involved neither Jeremiah Smith nor Carnell Tate catching a single pass.

Brandon Inniss returned the ensuing kickoff 37 yards to begin the pivotal possession, a drive that began innocently enough when CJ Donaldson was stuffed for a 1-yard loss on first down. But then Sayin found tight end Max Klare open down the right sideline for a 22-yard gain.

Two more short runs set up a third-and-5 at the Illinois 37, but Illini defensive end Gabe Jacas jumped offside to give the Buckeyes what should have been a free first down. But after the officiating crew stepped off only 4 yards to make it third-and-1, Sayin converted anyway by rolling to his right and completing a 7-yard flip to tight end Will Kacmarek.

The Buckeyes went back to the ground game with an end around to Smith, a play that initially looked like it had touchdown written all over it. But Illini defensive back Torrie Cox Jr. managed to slice between left guard Austin Siereveld and Klare, spilling Smith awkwardly to the turf. The OSU star receiver managed to

get himself to the sideline where he could be seen grimacing in pain for several minutes before rising to his feet, grabbing his helmet and eventually returning to action.

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Meanwhile, the Buckeyes continued to nickel and dime their way down the field. An 8-yard bolt up the middle by Donaldson was followed by a 3-yard pass to freshman Bo Jackson, and after that came a 2-yard gain from running back James Peoples. Sayin then completed a pass over the middle to Donaldson that came up just short of a first down, setting up fourth-and-1 at the Illinois 6-yard line.

By that time, Day and his offensive staff had apparently decided to continue to flex their athletic advantage, and Sayin executed the most perfect quarterback sneak this side of Philadelphia. The sneak gained 3 yards after which Donaldson finished things off with a pair of runs that picked up a yard followed by a 2-yard touchdown plunge.

That made it 27-10 with 2:08 remaining in the third quarter and completely killed any momentum Illinois might have had. On the Illini's next possession, when Jermaine Matthews Jr. stripped Altmyer of the ball and teammate Caden Curry pounced on it, the game was essentially over before the fourth quarter began.

### Achilles' Heel?

If Ohio State has a glaring weakness this season, it would be on special teams, and that was on full display against Illinois.

There were a pair of delay penalties against the punt team – one near the end of the first half and the other midway through the fourth quarter – that occurred while the Buckeyes were backed up in their own territory. Either time, it might have seemed prudent for Illinois to put on a punt block, but apparently Bielema figured things differently.

Meanwhile, OSU punter Joe McGuire certainly wasn't at his best in Champaign. He averaged only 37.8 yards on four attempts with his longest being a 41-yarder that bounced into the end zone for a touchback. McGuire entered the game with a 42.1-yard career average, good for ninth all-time in program history.

The kickoff return has largely been neutered by the NCAA as it seeks to take some of the violence out of a violent game, although Inniss managed the aforementioned 37-yard return in the third quarter that eventually led to an OSU touchdown. It was the longest kickoff return of the year for the Buckeyes – granted, it was only the third in six games – and the longest since Emeka Egbuka ran one back 67 yards against Maryland in 2021.

Ohio State hasn't had a kickoff return for a touchdown since Jordan Hall returned one 85 yards during a 37-7 win against Michigan in 2010.

In terms of punt returns, the Buckeyes had one for a touchdown last season when Caleb Downs took one back 79 yards against Indiana. But against Illinois, Inniss had one return for minus-2 yards. That gives him seven for the season at an average of 10.6 yards per return. That number is bit misleading, however. He had a 28-yarder against Ohio and a 32-yarder vs. Washington. Throw those two out and Inniss' average dips to 2.8. Suffice to say, as talented as this team obviously is, we are a long, long way from the days of Ted Ginn Jr.

Finally, kicker Jayden Fielding extended his streak of consecutive PATs to 125, and he added field goals of 26 and 31 yards, making him 6 for 7 with three-pointers this season. But while NFL kickers are now routinely hammering 50-yard field goals on a weekly basis – more than 70 through the league's first six weeks – Fielding's career long remains the 47-yarder he kicked two years ago against Minnesota. He is 0 for 3 during his career in tries from 50 yards or more.

### Halfway To Indy

Other than finding out UCLA isn't that bad and Penn State isn't that good, what have we learned as the Big Ten race reaches the halfway point in the 2025 season?

Actually, quite a bit.

Ohio State would appear to be the class of the conference so far, but Indiana made a strong case for being Team 1-A by accomplishing something the Buckeyes could not do last year – going to Autzen Stadium and beating Oregon. The Hoosiers will likely be favored in each of their final six regular-season games, perhaps putting them on a collision course with Ohio State in the Big Ten Championship Game set for Dec. 6 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

Behind the Buckeyes and Hoosiers with one conference loss are no fewer than nine teams. Among them, USC proved its physicality for a change during a 31-13 win against Michigan, while Nebraska finally cracked the code of how to win a close game, taking out Maryland by a 34-31 final. The Cornhuskers had lost 10 of their previous 11 conference games decided by one score or less.

Iowa added to the misery of Wisconsin and third-year coach Luke Fickell with a 37-0 shutout, the largest margin of victory for the Hawkeyes in a shutout win against a conference opponent since a 63-0 romp over Illinois in 2018. Wisconsin suffered its first shutout in 133 games dating back to the 59-0 spanking it took at the hands of Ohio State in the 2014 Big Ten Championship Game.

The Badgers are one of five Big Ten teams to start the conference season with a 0-3 record. That is their poorest start since 2008, when they lost their first four league games with Bielema at the helm.

The fact that Michigan State, Purdue and Rutgers join Wisconsin at 0-3 is not particularly surprising, but Penn State occupying the same cellar is a shocker. James Franklin was apparently paid in excess of \$50 million to go away, but that won't solve the prospect of a season on the brink in Happy Valley. The Nittany Lions lost quarterback Drew Allar for the season during an inexplicable 22-21 home loss to Northwestern, and they are 0-3 to start a Big Ten schedule for the first time since starting 0-5 during the COVID-shortened 2020 season.

Some of Michigan's deficiencies were on full display during its loss to USC – namely a suddenly suspect defense that yielded 489 total yards to the Trojans and the growing pains of freshman quarterback Bryce Underwood. The \$12 million NIL man threw for 207 yards against a secondary that was giving up 251.0 yards through the air on average, and he was sacked twice.

The loss to USC marked the Wolverines' biggest loss to an unranked opponent since a 38-13 loss to Illinois in 2009. I'm sure the very last person Sherrone Moore wants to be linked with is Rich Rodriguez, but that's who was coaching the Wolverines in 2009.

So, if the shoe fits ...



# OHIO STATE INSIDER

## OSU Remains No. 1 In AP Poll

Ohio State is still the No. 1 team in the country after its 34-26 win over No. 17 Illinois on Oct. 11. The Fighting Illini fell out of the rankings.

The Buckeyes received 50 first-place votes, followed by No. 2 Miami (Fla.) getting 13 first-place votes and Indiana receiving three. The Hoosiers are up to the No. 3 spot after taking down Oregon in Autzen Stadium, 30-20, a program-defining win for second-year head coach Curt Cignetti. The Hoosiers moved up from No. 7 while the Ducks fell five spots to No. 8.

No. 4 Texas A&M traded places with No. 5 Ole Miss while Alabama and Texas Tech both jumped two spots to No. 6 and No. 7, respectively.

No. 9 Georgia and No. 10 LSU finish out the top 10 teams in the Week 8 rankings.

Other Big Ten teams in the top 25 are No. 20 USC after it beat Michigan to knock the Wolverines out of the rankings, which helped No. 25 Nebraska make its first appearance in the top 25 this season.

No. 19 South Florida made the biggest jump in the poll, moving up five spots, while No. 14 Oklahoma dropped eight spots after losing the Red River Rivalry to now-No. 21 Texas.

Utah (No. 23) and Cincinnati (No. 24) made their first appearances in the top 25 while USC and Texas returned to the poll after falling out earlier in the season.

## Houston, Styles Don't Travel

Ohio State missed multiple key players during its win at Gies Memorial Stadium. Most notably, the Buckeyes were without sophomore defensive lineman Eddrick Houston and graduate cornerback Lorenzo Styles Jr., who both did not make the trip to Champaign, Ill., due to their injuries.

Houston hasn't had the sort of season he may have hoped for and has not solidified himself as a starter along the defensive line. Still, Houston is coming off one of his better performances of the season against Minnesota, when he logged a tackle and a quarterback hurry. For the season, Houston has five total tackles.

Senior defensive tackle Tywone Malone Jr. started his fourth straight game at the three-technique position, with Jason Moore also receiving time as a backup at the position.

Styles has had a strong season in his first year as a starter as the Buckeyes' nickel back. Appearing in all of the Buckeyes' first five games, Styles logged 17 total tackles, including 1½ for loss, and a pass breakup. With Styles out, the Buckeyes moved junior cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. over to nickel and inserted freshman cornerback Devin Sanchez into the lineup at outside corner.

Junior receiver Bryson Rodgers was also unavailable for the second straight week. Rodgers has appeared for Ohio State only as a rotational player, but he has caught two passes for 22 yards.

Also out for the Buckeyes were tight end Max LeBlanc, quarterback Mason Maggs, defensive lineman Eric Mensah, running back Anthony Rogers, defensive lineman Max Roy, safety Deshaun Stewart, defensive lineman Ahmed Tounkara and receiver Preston Wolfe.



Eddrick Houston

## 2025 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Aug. 30	TEXAS	W, 14-7	FOX	4-2, 23-6 win over Oklahoma
Sept. 6	GRAMBLING	W, 70-0	BTN	3-3, 21-20 loss to Texas Southern
Sept. 13	OHIO	W, 37-9	Peacock	3-3, idle
Sept. 27	at Washington	W, 24-6	CBS	5-1, 38-19 win over Rutgers
Oct. 4	MINNESOTA	W, 42-3	NBC	4-2, 27-20 win over Purdue
Oct. 11	at Illinois	W 34-16	FOX	<b>5-2, 34-16 loss to Ohio State</b>
Oct. 18	at Wisconsin	3:30	CBS	2-4, 37-0 loss to Iowa
Nov. 1	PENN STATE	TBA	TBA	3-3, 22-21 loss to Northwestern
Nov. 8	at Purdue	TBA	TBA	2-4, 27-20 loss to Minnesota
Nov. 15	UCLA	TBA	TBA	2-4, 38-13 win over Michigan State
Nov. 22	RUTGERS	TBA	TBA	3-3, 38-19 loss to Washington
Nov. 29	at Michigan	Noon	FOX	4-2, 31-13 loss to USC

## OSU-Wisconsin To Kick At 3:30

The game time for Ohio State's Week 8 matchup against Wisconsin has been revealed. The Buckeyes will face off against Luke Fickell and the Badgers at 3:30 Eastern on CBS when they head to Camp Randall for their second straight Big Ten road contest on Oct. 18.

The last time the two teams matched up was on Oct. 28, 2023, when the Buckeyes beat Wisconsin 24-10 in Madison, Wis.

Marvin Harrison Jr. had one of his best games of the season that game with six receptions for 123 yards and two touchdowns while TreVeyon Henderson rushed for 162 yards on 24 carries with a score.

The two teams have matched up a total of 86 times, with Ohio State leading the all-time series 63-18-5. The last time the Badgers beat the Buckeyes was in 2010 with a 31-10 score at Camp Randall.

Badger running backs John Clay and James White combined for three touchdowns in the game while David Gilreath ran a kickoff back for a touchdown as well. Terrelle Pryor was 14 of 28 for 156 yards and an interception in the contest with 18 carries for 56 yards. Dan "Boom" Herron ran 19 times for 91 yards and two scores for the Buckeyes.

Ohio State currently holds a 10-game win streak over Wisconsin.

The only other game time revealed at

this point is Ohio State's noon matchup against Michigan the last week of the regular season.

## OSU Names Six Players Of Game

Ohio State recognized six Buckeyes with player of the game honors for their standout performances against Minnesota.

Quarterback Julian Sayin, wide receivers Carnell Tate, Brandon Inniss and Quincy Porter as well as cornerback Davison Igbinosun and linebacker Sonny Styles were named Ohio State's players of the game in the Buckeyes' 42-3 win over Minnesota Oct. 4.

The Buckeyes' offensive players of the game, Sayin and Tate, connected nine times for 183 yards and a score, earning the junior wideout career highs in catches and receiving yards. Sayin finished his outing against Minnesota completing 23 of 27 passes for 326 yards and three scores, including a 44-yard touchdown pass to Tate in the second quarter that the sophomore quarterback perfectly placed in the end zone.

On defense, Styles and Igbinosun set the tone for Ohio State, earning player of the game honors while helping the Buckeyes hold the Golden Gophers scoreless after a field goal on the opening drive.

Styles led the team with eight tackles (four solo) and added one tackle for loss. Igbinosun, on the other hand, ended a solid showcase with five tackles (four solo).

Inniss earned special teams player of the game honors after returning two punts for a total of 10 yards, all of which came on his first return.

The second return was a rare trick play by Ohio State, which is likely what earned Inniss the recognition on special teams. Midway through the third quarter, Inniss fielded a punt and took multiple steps forward before slinging the football across the field to Lorenzo Styles, who took the backward lateral 36 yards to the Minnesota 20-yard line.

Porter joined Inniss as the second special teams player of the game. The freshman receiver hauled in one pass for 15 yards in the victory and played a crucial role on the Buckeyes' return unit.

## Day Comments On Hicks, Hartford Redshirts

It was reported on Oct. 5 that junior safety Malik Hartford and senior defensive end C.J. Hicks would be redshirting this season. Head coach Ryan Day quickly indicated he wasn't sure whether that would happen yet.

On Oct. 7, Day said that decisions to redshirt will be made at the end of the year, add-



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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.

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Just take advantage of the "Texas Beater-Inflation Beater Special" with its \$20 off any level BSB subscription, and we will upgrade you to first-class mail in an envelope through the Michigan game for free – now a \$20 value. Just reach out to us at the above address or numbers.

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ing that both Hartford and Hicks must be ready for the Buckeyes going forward.

"We make decisions at the end of the year whether we're going to redshirt guys, based on what happens and so we're going to take it week to week based on availability, depth chart," Day said. "But those guys, they need to be ready to go this week if that's what comes up. The rule is four games and then being able to play in the postseason. So we're going to evaluate it. But those guys need to be ready because before you know it, they could be in a game. But we're also going to be smart about how we move forward."

Hicks opened the season with a chance to earn significant playing time in an unproven defensive end group in seniors Ca-

den Curry, Kenyatta Jackson Jr. and Beau Atkinson.

However, through five games Hicks played just 50 snaps for Ohio State totaling six tackles (two solo) and one tackle for loss. He's been the Buckeyes fourth defensive end on the depth chart, behind starters Curry and Jackson as well as the backup transfer Atkinson.

Like Hicks, Hartford also began fall camp with a chance to take Ohio State's starting role. However, the West Chester, Ohio, native was beat out by sophomore Jaylen McClain for the strong safety spot next to free safety Caleb Downs.

Hartford has recorded just two tackles for the Buckeyes this season and had yet to see any action on the first team.

### Sayin Earns Praise From Former OSU QB

Sayin has begun to draw attention for his play, but Buckeye great Troy Smith believes he still isn't receiving the recognition he deserves.

The former Heisman trophy-winning quarterback, Smith, tweeted that if the Texas quarterback Arch Manning was playing to the level that Sayin is, he'd be first in Heisman votes.

"I've got to talk about straight facts," Smith said. "If the kid at Texas would have had the start that Julian Sayin is having here for our Ohio State, he'd be first in Heisman votes, Davey O'Brien talks, and any other major awards at the end of the season. Put

some respect on what he's doing."

The message serves as both high praise for Sayin and a dig at Manning, who has had an up-and-down season at Texas so far.

Sayin was coming off one of his best performances of the year against Minnesota. The redshirt freshman earned the mark of Ohio State and the Big Ten's top-rated offensive player of the week, according to Pro Football Focus (91.9).

It was the second time in five weeks that Sayin had been one of the Buckeyes' three highest-graded players. Only Curry and defensive tackle Kayden McDonald had also done it twice. Sayin has thrown for 1,479 yards and a 15-3 touchdown-to-interception ratio, while completing 78.4 percent of his passes this season.

Manning, on the other hand, has had an inconsistent year for the Longhorns. He has led a Texas team that began the season as the Associated Press' No. 1 ranked team to a 4-2 record, while passing for 1,317 yards and 12 touchdowns, but has completed just 63.0 percent of his passes and thrown five interceptions. The sophomore quarterback also has rushed for 194 yards and five touchdowns.

### Day Lauds OSU OL Padilla

For the first time this season, junior offensive lineman Josh Padilla earned reps with the Buckeyes' first-team offense, but it wasn't at his primary position.

Typically slotted as Ohio State's backup center, Padilla earned snaps as the offense's right guard in place of starter Tegra Tshabola after the Buckeyes had a big lead in the blowout win over Minnesota.

Padilla stepped in for Tshabola at right guard for two of Ohio State's drives in the second quarter before returning to play center with the second team late in the game.

Day said on Oct. 7 that Padilla's tireless effort in practice earned him time with the first-team offense.

"I think it's more about the work Josh is putting in on a daily basis," Day said. "This is a guy who plays center and plays guard

**Continued On Page 6**



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# OHIO STATE

## INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

and just goes to work every day, and you just watch the way he plays.”

In his second appearance of the season on offense (Grambling State, 20 snaps), Padilla logged 19 snaps against the Golden Gophers while the Ohio State offensive line didn't allow a single sack.

Day said Padilla's improvement and relentless motor have stood out, noting those as key reasons he hopes to expand the lineman's role.

“When you watch our second group go out there late in the game, they usually go three-and-out. These guys went right down the field. When we see Josh out there, we see really good play. We wanted Josh to get



Josh Padilla

some work at right guard because we feel like he deserved that opportunity.”

### Frosh QB St. Clair Sheds Black Stripe

Ohio State true freshman quarterback Tavien St. Clair had his black stripe removed on Oct. 7 to become the latest “official” member of the Buckeyes.

St. Clair, a 6-4, 230-pound passer, was a highly touted recruit. The five-star was ranked the No. 7 player in the country, the No. 3 quarterback and the No. 1 player from the state of Ohio. St. Clair was also the highest-ranked player in Ohio State's recruiting class.

It was easy to see why St. Clair was well-liked by recruiting experts when he threw for 2,536 yards and 29 touchdowns as a senior at Bellefontaine High School.

Behind quarterbacks Sayin and sophomore Lincoln Kienholz, playing time has been hard to come by for St. Clair, but he made an appearance in Ohio State's 70-0 win over Grambling State on Sept. 6. In limited playing time, St. Clair went 0 of 2 passing in that game.

Considering Sayin has looked like one of the best quarterbacks in the country so far this season, it seems unlikely St. Clair will receive substantial playing time anytime



Tavien St. Clair

soon, but the coaching staff may try to give him more opportunities late in games now that his black stripe has been removed.

### Aviators Get First Dibs On OSU Players

Following the announcement of several new United Football League franchises Oct. 7, the league revealed plans to establish a pipeline from Ohio State to the Columbus Aviators.

The Aviators, who are set to join the league in 2026, will play at the Historic Crew Stadium with the season set to begin in late March.

UFL co-owner Mike Repole said that the league is planning to ensure a rule for the Columbus Aviators to have “first dibs” on all Ohio State players.

“Every player that comes out of that Ohio State program, if they want to continue playing football (in the UFL), they'll be playing here,” Repole said on Oct. 9.

That rule won't just go for the Aviators. According to Repole, all UFL teams will have the first opportunity to sign players from colleges within a 100-mile radius of their home city.

UFL CEO Russ Brandon said that he's developed a strong relationship with Ohio State athletic director Ross Bjork, adding that he wants to continue to strengthen the bond between their league and the Buckeyes.

“I'm good friends with Ross, and we've had some talks, and listen, Ohio State football is king,” Brandon said. “It's one of the greatest universities on the planet. It's great football. Coach Day has done an amazing job, Coach (Jim Tressel) before that. Just some incredible people have come through here. So as much as we can do and as much as they'll have us, quite frankly, I'm going to lean on those relationships and want to be a big part of Ohio State, the Buckeye family, and obviously here in this great city of Columbus.”

### NCAA Votes Athletes Can Bet On Pros

The NCAA Division I administrative committee has announced that it adopted a proposal to allow college athletes and staff members to bet on professional sports.

According to the statement made by the NCAA, the ruling would still prohibit players and staff from betting on any collegiate athletics but would no longer prohibit professional sports gambling.

The NCAA Division II and III administrative committees must also approve the proposal in order for the rule to go into effect.

“The administrative committee was clear in its discussion today that it remains concerned about the risks associated with all forms of sports gambling but ultimately voted to reduce restrictions on student-athletes in this area to better align with their campus peers,” said Josh Whitman, Illinois athletic director and committee chair in the release. “This change allows the NCAA, the conferences and the member schools to focus on protecting the integrity of college games while, at the same time, encouraging healthy habits for student-athletes who choose to engage in betting activities on professional sports.”

The statement made by the NCAA said the goal of the proposal was to improve

efforts to enforce the anti-gambling policies at the college level, protecting the integrity of college sports by concentrating oversight on its own events, rather than all sports, while also providing athletes with greater education and resources to prevent problem gambling.

“Abstinence-only approaches to social challenges for college-aged individuals are often not as successful as approaches that focus on education about risks and open dialogue,” said Dr. Deena Casiero, NCAA chief medical officer in the release. “The NCAA will continue to collaborate with schools to help them provide student-athletes with meaningful education and other resources for student-athletes who choose to participate in betting on professional sports. This harm reduction approach gives schools an opportunity to help student-athletes make educated decisions, prevent risky behavior and seek support without fear of impacting their eligibility.”

NCAA Divisions II and III are expected to make a decision on the rule during their meetings in late October, and the rule change would take effect Nov. 1 if it's approved by both.

### NCAA May Allow Uniforms To Have Sponsorships

In addition to easing its rules on sports gambling, the NCAA may soon be allowing teams to wear patches on their uniforms. According to a release from the NCAA on Oct. 8, the Division I administrative committee introduced a proposal that would allow schools to add two commercial logos to their uniforms.

As it currently stands, teams are allowed to have only the logos of the manufacturer of their equipment and apparel on their uniforms.

“The committee's introduction of this proposal demonstrates the continued efforts by the NCAA to modernize rules where appropriate within Division I,” Whitman said in the release. “As we move into a new era of Division I athletics, in which student-athletes can receive unprecedented financial benefits and support from their schools, it is appropriate for NCAA members to identify and consider additional opportunities for schools to generate additional revenue to fully support those benefits.”

A final proposal is expected to be voted on in January, and if the change is adopted it would go into effect in August.

### P4 Schools Yet To Sign CSC Agreement

Yahoo Sports' Ross Dellenger reported on Oct. 10 that a document, described by many in the collegiate sports industry as a participation agreement, has yet to be signed by Power Four conferences. The agreement, which binds schools together under House settlement terms, was previously signed by the SEC in the summer, but a new version of the document has emerged meaning the SEC needs to sign off again.

According to Dellenger, the Big Ten is causing the delay, because some officials are concerned about the College Sports Commission (or CSC) being able to issue postseason bans to schools that violate rules.

The Big Ten believes that a postseason ban would negatively affect student-athletes and would rather have a limited version

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"We want to thank the many BSB readers who have stepped up and shown their support for Buckeye Sports Bulletin through the VIP program," BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz said. "It is a true vote of confidence in what we are doing now, what we have done the previous 43 years and what we plan to do in the future."

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of the punishment that could be issued to schools that ignored previously handed down sanctions or obstructs an investigation.

"Everybody is saying we need to have rules," one power league athletic director from outside the Big Ten told Dellenger. "Unless there are significant consequences, how do we enforce these rules? We are once again in a no-man's land because of the inaction of one of our conferences. That's not healthy for the sustainability of college athletics."

Dellenger, who reported that the power conferences are even considering reintroducing the death penalty as a punishment, said that the Big Ten will either find a compromise over the postseason punishment or the document will not be signed and lawsuits will continue to be filed against enforcements from the CSC.

## Sullingers To Be Honored

OSU basketball season is rapidly ap-

proaching, and the Agonis Club of Columbus is offering a great way to get in the mood.

In a different take on their annual Agonis Club Person of the Year Banquet. This year the event will honor "Persons" of the Year, the Satch Sullinger family – Satch, JJ, Julian and Jared.

Join M.C. Paul Keels and many other local and Ohio State names at the banquet and meet and greet to be held at Villa Milano at 1630 Schrock Road, Columbus, 43229, on Wednesday, Oct. 22.

James "Satch" Sullinger is a retired educator and high school basketball coach from Columbus City Schools. He is a state champion, Naismith Award winner and Ohio Coach of the Year Award winner, and he was named National High School Coach of Year in 2010.

J.J. Sullinger played for Ohio State and coach Thad Matta (a former Agonis Club Person of the Year). Julian Sullinger played for Kent State and then embarked

on a coaching career that has led him currently to Duquesne University where he is an assistant men's basketball coach. Jared Sullinger led Ohio State to the Final Four and played in the NBA for the Boston Celtics and Toronto Raptors.

Doors open at 5:45 p.m., and the meet and greet runs from 6-7. There will be a silent auction and cash bar, with dinner served at 7 p.m.

Tickets can be purchased at [www.agonisclub.org](http://www.agonisclub.org) for \$75 per person, \$125 per couple and \$500 for a table of eight and include dinner and the meet and greet. Sponsorship opportunities are also available starting as low as \$75.

For information on sponsorships or any other questions, email Tom Sappington at [agonisclubcolumbus@gmail.com](mailto:agonisclubcolumbus@gmail.com).

## Fleming Faces Charges After ATV Crash

Former Ohio State receiver Julian Fleming appeared in court on Oct. 8 to face mul-

tiple charges stemming from a fatal ATV crash that occurred in the spring.

Fleming faces felony charges of homicide by vehicle while driving under the influence, homicide by vehicle, aggravated assault while driving under the influence and aggravated assault by vehicle. Fleming also faces a misdemeanor charge of driving under the influence.

The crash occurred in late May when a deer ran out into the roadway. Fleming and his girlfriend, Alyssa Boyd, were both sent flying out of the ATV. Fleming suffered serious injuries, and Boyd was pronounced dead at the scene. Police said neither Boyd nor Fleming were wearing protective gear on the four-wheeler.

Fleming, a 24-year-old, played for the Buckeyes from 2020-23 before finishing his collegiate career at Penn State for the 2024 season.



# Defense Not Sweet On Allowing 16 Points

Continued From Page 1

even though turnovers had been something the team always strived for, there was an extra emphasis from defensive coordinator Matt Patricia because of the lack of take-aways recently.

“Coach Patricia, he preaches taking the ball away, and I feel like we needed that in the moment, and I did it,” McDonald said. “Last week we didn’t have any, and we were coming into a hostile environment and we have to somehow get the ball back to the offense.”

Ohio State’s offense quickly took advantage of the field position again, starting on the Illinois 26-yard line, and needed just five plays for redshirt-freshman quarterback Julian Sayin to hit Bo Jackson on a screen pass for a 17-yard touchdown.

Sayin spoke highly of the defense after the game and how they put the offense in great field position often.

“The defense, I can’t give enough credit to those guys creating turnovers like that and giving us a short field,” the QB said. “It makes it a little bit easier as an offense to play downhill when you’re playing that short field. I think they played really well off the line. They played hard up front.”

But the Buckeyes weren’t done taking the ball away from the Illini yet. Late in the third quarter after Donaldson’s second touchdown of the game put OSU up 27-10, Mathews was lined up in the slot and

blitzed from the left side. He was one of just four rushers against the five-man Illinois offensive line. But with so much attention on linebacker Arvell Reese and edge rusher Kenyatta Jackson Jr. on the right side of the line – both of whom faked rushing and dropped into coverage – Mathews was able to get into the backfield quickly and punch the ball out of Altmeyer’s hands as he was looking downfield for a receiver.

Senior defensive end Caden Curry jumped on the loose ball, and the Buckeyes were yet again headed back in the other direction, this time from the Illinois 24-yard line.

It took seven plays for the Buckeyes to take advantage of the turnover when Sayin found sophomore pass catcher Jeremiah Smith in one-on-one coverage on the right side of the end zone for a 2-yard score and a 24-point lead.

With an advantage of three in the turnover battle, head coach Ryan Day felt comfortable that the game was in hand.

“The defense created a bunch of turnovers,” he said after the win. “When that happens, the chances of winning are going to be obviously in our favor.”

But it wasn’t all sunshine and rainbows for the Buckeye defense. This was the first time an opponent scored 10 or more points on the unit. They had given up seven, zero, nine, six and three points in their first five games of the season and looked about as



SONNY BROCKWAY

**IT’S MINE — Junior defensive end Kayden McDonald (98) holds the football after stripping it from Illinois running back Ca’Lil Valentine in the second quarter, one of three Illini turnovers. Junior cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. (7) is about to join the celebration.**

dominant as they could have after losing eight starters to the NFL.

While the defense still looked mostly dominant in the game against the Illini, 16 points was too much for some Buckeyes to walk out of Gies Memorial Stadium happy with their performance, McDonald most of all.

“(Giving up 16 points) definitely bothers me,” McDonald said. “If you want to be the best defense in the country, we can’t let people score. We have to get back to work tomorrow and just keep going.”

Day understands that the game might not have gone exactly how they would have drawn it up, but he believes that is expected when playing a team like Illinois, which he said in the week leading into the game he was considering a top-10 squad in the country.

“Was it all perfect? No, but they’re a good team,” Day said. “That’s kind of how it goes. We all expect perfection, including me, but I thought we played well there towards the end of the third, end of the fourth (quarter). And then we took our foot off the pedal a little bit and lost our focus.”

“But it’s a good sign when you have to go into a locker room after a win like this and kind of make sure everybody understands what a great win it was for us because I think we all felt like we left a little bit on the field, but all that being said, the effort was excellent. I liked the look in our eyes.”

McDonald was confident that the offense would be able to cover for the defense if the unit ever had an off game, but it isn’t something he wants to happen. The Buckeyes are not only trying to hold opposing offenses to

a low enough score for a win, but they are striving to be the best in the country, which they have been to this point.

“Well, I knew the offense had us, but as the defense being the best defense in the country, we don’t want anybody to score,” McDonald said. “So we’ve got to find the mistakes and fix them and keep moving on.”

Mathews has the same hope as his teammate, knowing that if they keep their opponents out of the end zone, it’s going to be very hard for other teams to pull out a win against the Buckeyes. And Ohio State’s defense has been extremely effective at keeping teams out of the end zone. It has allowed just four touchdowns this season, one to Texas, one to the Bobcats and two to Illinois.

“If they can’t score, they can’t win,” Mathews said. “That’s our mentality every week, and just go in there and dominate on defense. I think just keep dominating every week, keep dominating every week.”

Part of the reason for the relative under-performance might have been the fact that two regular contributors, sophomore defensive tackle Eddrick Houston and senior nickel back Lorenzo Styles Jr., did not make the trip to Champaign due to injuries.

The starting spot at defensive tackle wasn’t different than it had been since Tywone Malone Jr. had taken over the starting role from Houston recently, but the depth was affected with Jason Moore getting into the regular rotation.

With Styles out of the game, Mathews moved over to nickel, and true freshman Devin Sanchez made his first career start

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SONNY BROCKWAY

**TAKEAWAY — Senior defensive end Caden Curry lets everyone know he recovered the fumble by quarterback Luke Altmyer that cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. forced. Three Illinois turnovers were converted into 21 points in Ohio State's 34-16 victory.**

on the outside. Sanchez was targeted often by Altmyer and gave up a few catches, but overall the defense wasn't at full strength.

Mathews has played in the nickel before and practiced there often in the offseason, so he was ready for the switch. Day felt that Mathews played well in the slot and that the more reps he gets there, the better he will be. But he played very well for his first start ever at the position.

"The first thing is the only way to grow is to go through experiences like that. He's right there, so the coverage is good, and he's only going to get better with his experience, and you have to play through that," Day said. "But for Jermaine to move inside the way he did, it says a lot about his preparation because it's one thing to go through a walk-through. It's another thing to go through practice."

There are more responsibilities as a slot corner, having to be good in coverage against some of the quicker receivers opponents have and also being ready to be more of a factor in the run game as well. Day recognized the extra work Mathews had to do and gave a lot of praise to the corner.

"When you're now a nickel and you have to now fit the run, you have to hit the blitzes, the coverage, everything happens a little bit faster when you get closer to the ball. And so for him to be able to do that, and play the way he did, it says a lot about his preparation. But also give credit to (cornerbacks coach) Tim Walton and the work that they

did during the week, that was well done.

"Hopefully we can get Lorenzo back for next week, but depth is going to get challenged, and we've talked a lot about this. When you have multiple guys who can play multiple positions, that's creating depth. It's a good sign for Jermaine."

Mathews said that it was a welcome change switching from the outside to the inside for a game. He enjoyed being able to blitz more often and get into the backfield enough to be able to force his third turnover of the season.

"It's fun. I do a lot of covering," Mathews said. "When you get a play out to go blitz and go make another different type of play. It's fun."

The Buckeyes were still able to keep the confidence they had built up through the first five weeks of the season despite giving up 16 points. They caused the most turnovers by an Illinois team since the last regular-season game of 2023 for the Fighting Illini.

They also are still the best in the country in points allowed per game at 6.8 points per game.

Mathews made sure to communicate that the confidence the defense always had is still there.

"It's scary. Watch out, it's scary. We have a lot of confidence," Mathews said.

Day likes the confidence his team has in itself.

"They're competitive," Day said. "They're

edgy. They like these type of environments, and they want to be great and they expect to be great."

McDonald's confidence has Ohio State making it all the way to Indianapolis in December for the Big Ten Championship Game, where the Buckeyes haven't been since the shortened 2020 COVID season.

"Big Ten is the next step, going to the Big Ten championship and we're on to Wisconsin," McDonald said.

Day thinks that while the inexperienced Buckeye defense might not have had enough game reps early in the season, that they have quickly matured.

"As much as I was on them about growing up and maturing, you are seeing a pretty mature group," Day said. "I mean, they're starting to learn really what it takes, and they're pulling for each other."

The head coach wants to see the growth the team has shown during the season continue as they go.

"We keep pushing them about being consistent in their approach, and so far, we've got that. But it's a long road," Day said. "We're only halfway through the season. I think the guys who we didn't know about going into the season, they've now proven that they belong. Now what do we want this team to look like as we continue to grow and build?"

### Illibuck Stays With OSU

As the game of college football continues to change rapidly, former rivalries that used to define the sport fade further and further

into the past. While that will never be the case with the Ohio State-Michigan game, one of those rivalries that doesn't mean as much as it used to is Ohio State-Illinois.

The Illibuck trophy (created in 1925) is the second oldest in the Big Ten behind the Little Brown Jug trophy traded between Michigan and Minnesota since 1903.

This was the first time since the 2017 season that the Buckeyes and Illini matched up since the Big Ten was split up into East and West divisions in 2011 and the two were opposite each other. Day was in his first season at Ohio State as the co-offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at that time.

The gap between that game and this one was the longest between two contests that included the Buckeyes and Illini since they matched up in 1914. The matchup won't take as long of a break after this season. The dates aren't known yet, but the Buckeyes and Illini are set to match up in the 2026 and 2028 seasons.

With the win over Illinois, Ohio State has now taken the wooden turtle the last 10 times the trophy was up for grabs. The players took turns holding the trophy after the game, but not much was made of any rivalry between the two programs.

Day did say leading up to the game that he got a chance to hold the trophy after the 52-14 win in 2017.

"We played them at home in the rain," he said on Oct. 7. "I remember it rained really hard that night. I got the chance to hold it. Great tradition. Two great programs. I'll make sure the players know about it."

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# Sayin Keeps Poise Against Fighting Illini

Ohio State's 34-16 win over Illinois was the first time redshirt-freshman quarterback Julian Sayin took on a ranked opponent on the road, but it was hard to tell based on his performance.

The Buckeye signal-caller not only had another solid day as a passer, throwing for 166 yards and two touchdowns on 19-of-27 passing, but also helped the Buckeyes stay disciplined. Despite playing in a raucous environment, Ohio State's offense committed no pre-snap penalties.

## GAME NOTEBOOK Bobby Gorbett

"I think it's just his consistency, week in, week out, day in, day out," junior tight end Max Klare said of Sayin's composure on the road.

Throughout this season, it seems like the Buckeyes have toed the line between letting their first-year starter loose and not giving him too much responsibility. Against the Fighting Illini, Ohio State played on the more conservative side.

Sayin's 166 passing yards were his second-lowest total of the season so far, after 126 against Texas. That didn't mean Sayin had a bad game, though. As coach Ryan Day pointed out after the game, the Buckeyes often had great field position due to Illinois' mistakes, meaning the offense didn't have a long way to go and didn't need more out of the young quarterback.

"The thing that was tricky was – it's a good thing – but we were in plus territory a lot," Day said. "It's hard to be explosive as you get to the plus 25-yard area because the field gets pulled down, and then, when we were a little bit towards midfield, they were playing a little bit more coverage."

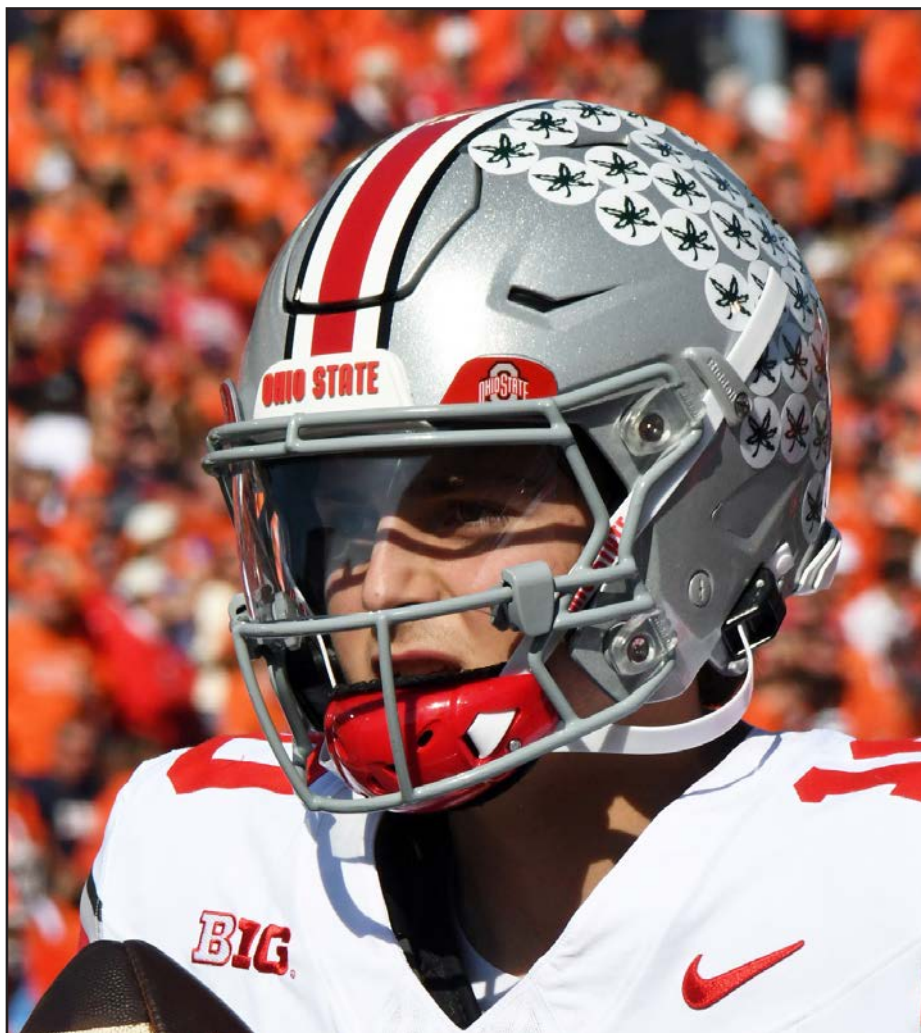
Unlike in past weeks when teams took their chances against Ohio State's receivers, Illinois opted to keep the Buckeyes' dynamic pass-catchers in front of them. The longest catch an Ohio State pass catcher had in the game was a 22-yarder for Klare.

After the game, Sayin said he was fine checking the ball down to open receivers if that was what was available to him.

"You want to take what the defense gives you," he explained. "If they give us a certain coverage and we don't have anything, just check the ball down and make smart decisions. We're never going to lose the game on third down. If something's not there, we're not going to force it. I think maybe I forced one in here or there today. We just want to keep going."

Sayin's patience was reflected in his third-down stat line. The first-year starter completed 7 of 10 passes on third downs for 52 yards.

Sayin did have his misses. On one third down in the red zone, it appeared that junior receiver Carnell Tate broke open in the end zone, but Sayin misfired and the Buckeyes had to settle for their second field goal of the game.



SONNY BROCKWAY

**ON TARGET — Redshirt-freshman quarterback Julian Sayin took what the defense gave him and concentrated on not forcing his throws. He was 19 of 27 for 166 yards and two touchdowns without a turnover in the 34-16 win at Illinois on Oct. 11.**

But Sayin also had his highlights in the red zone. The Carlsbad, Calif., native threw his second touchdown of the game on a play early in the fourth quarter. The play was a simple goal-line fade, but it worked to perfection. Wide receiver Jeremiah Smith used his acceleration and surge to immediately create separation on Illinois cornerback Juice Clarke. Sayin didn't have a very tough throw to make, but he still accurately threw the ball to the wide-open Smith.

"It was an awesome route," Sayin said. "I was anticipating that I was going to have to leave it a little short so he could go up and get it, but he beat him so bad I could just put it in the back of the end zone."

### Running Game Inconsistent

With the Buckeyes again opting to take the pressure off Sayin in a road environment, the run game was asked to carry a large load for the offense.

It was sort of a mixed bag for Ohio State runners. Despite finishing the game with 37 rushes, Ohio State had only 106 rushing yards. The Buckeyes' 2.9 average yards per carry was their second-worst average of the season.

"I think we were running physical," Day said. "We'll look and see if there are some things that there was more there because we always want to gain 8 or 9 yards a car-

ry. When you get tight in the red zone, the expectations of those are going to be four or more, but we want to be four more in every run outside of the 10-yard line. We needed to go and look to see: Is it a blocking issue? Is there a personnel issue? Are we blocking and then just getting what we blocked for?"

The Buckeyes' issues on the ground weren't due to a lack of movement from the offensive line, according to Day.

"We were moving the line of scrimmage. There were some blocks that we lost across the board, and then we've got to make sure that the runs are hitting exactly right, because some did, but others, I thought maybe there was more there, and we needed to figure out why that is."

One thing that made it difficult for the Buckeyes on the ground was that they weren't fully healthy for the entire game.

Freshman running back Bo Jackson, who has emerged as Ohio State's leading rusher over the past month, was banged up early in the third quarter with an injury and didn't return. Despite missing a large portion of the game, Jackson finished the game as Ohio State's leading rusher with 10 carries for 47 yards. It doesn't seem as though the injury is serious because Day said he would have remained in the game if it were a bit more competitive.

With Jackson on the sidelines, Ohio

State turned to power back CJ Donaldson Jr. Donaldson wasn't quite as effective as his freshman counterpart. He finished the game with 44 yards on 13 carries (3.4-yard average) and, unlike Jackson, seldom made the extra defender miss to spring big runs. Donaldson still did his job in the red zone. He finished the game with the Buckeyes' only rushing touchdowns in the game, both of which came from within 2 yards.

Donaldson attributed his success in short-yardage situations to his offensive line.

"They make it easy," Donaldson said. "They just move the line of scrimmage. All I've got to do is run the ball behind The Great Wall of Ohio."

### OSU Pass Catchers Unselfish In Win

It wasn't just the Buckeye offensive line that paved the way for Donaldson and Co. to make plays, but also Ohio State's receivers. One week after combining for 230 yards receiving, Smith and Tate made their presence felt in the run game. On one play in the red zone, Smith flattened the defender in front of him, putting him on the ground after pushing him through the end zone, and continued to block him while he was on the ground.

"Jeremiah is – I can't say enough about him, about Carnell, in a game like this," Day said. "We found ourselves down in there a lot, and ran the ball a lot, and they're into it just like everybody else. They want it to look like last week every week, but when you have a team that understands what needs to get done, that's when you have a chance to be special."

Perhaps the best example of Ohio State's unselfishness came in the second quarter on a second-and-12 play when the game was somewhat in question at 13-0. On the play, Smith, who was covered by a couple of Illini defenders, ran from the left side of the field toward the middle to leave plenty of space for Jackson. Jackson took the dump-off from Sayin and used a great block from Klare to get into the end zone and put Ohio State up 20-0.

Klare, who has shown his unselfishness plenty of times in the past few weeks as a run-blocker, emphasized the importance of Smith and Tate's effort away from the ball.

"Those guys deserve to get the ball, and when they're defending them like they have been, they sometimes have to take the back seat a little bit, but not really," he said. "They're still making plays out there, but it's impressive to see guys that mature and play that well."

### Sanchez Makes First Start

Although the Buckeyes have been mainly healthy so far this season, they apparently were bitten by the injury bug ahead of their clash with Illinois. Ohio State was missing not only defensive lineman Edrick Houston, but also starting nickel cornerback Lorenzo Styles Jr.

The Buckeyes moved outside corner Jermaine Mathews Jr. to nickel and inserted Devin Sanchez into the lineup on the outside. It wasn't always easy for Sanchez,



# Game Analysis

## What Worked Well

Though the Illini offense put up the most points on Ohio State's defense through six weeks, the Buckeye rush defense was stout against Illinois in Champaign on Oct. 11.

The Illini rushed 27 times for just 47 yards in Ohio State's blowout win. The Buckeyes held Illinois' two top ball carriers – junior running backs Aidan Laughery and Kaden Feagin – to a combined 72 yards and a touchdown.

However, Ohio State was routinely in the Illini backfield, sacking Illinois quarterback Luke Altmyer four times as he rushed for negative 20 yards on six rushing attempts, hurting the rushing total of the Illini, as did the 14 yards charged to punter Keelan Crimmins, who was downed when his knee hit the field.

The Ohio State defensive line also recovered two fumbles. On the first play of Illinois' fourth drive, Buckeye defensive tackle Kayden McDonald stuffed running back Ca'Lil Valentine at the line of scrimmage, pulling the ball away from the sophomore as the pair fell to the ground to secure an Ohio State forced fumble and recovery.

The second recovery by defensive end Caden Curry came on a strip-sack from cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. with 1:33 to play in the third quarter.

## What Didn't Work

Although it's tough to identify where Ohio State truly fell flat in its 34-16 win over Illinois, the Buckeyes struggled to score in the red zone once again.

Ohio State had two drives in the first half deep in Illinois territory that resulted in field goals rather than touchdowns, which likely would have sealed the Buckeyes' win in the first half alone.

On Ohio State's first possession of the game, it embarked on a 12-play, 67-yard drive that had the Buckeyes march all the way down to the Illinois 8. But on fourth-and-2, head coach Ryan Day

elected to play it safe and kick a field goal, trusting his defense instead of going for an early touchdown lead.

Three drives later, Ohio State was back in the same position. After starting on Illinois' 38-yard line due to a special teams gaffe, the Buckeyes could muster only a six-play, 25-yard drive and were stuffed at the Illinois 13 and held to a 31-yard field goal.

On a different note, after multiple clean performances, each of Ohio State's three cornerbacks – Davison Igbinosun, Jermaine Mathews Jr. and Devin Sanchez – committed costly pass-interference penalties. The last two penalties led to an Illinois field goal and a touchdown.

## Play Of The Game

Illinois found itself with the ball on its own 30, down 17 and in dire need of a score with just 2:08 to play in the third quarter. It took just two plays for Ohio State to get possession back. On second-and-10, Mathews flew off the edge, turning the corner before stripping Altmyer as Curry jumped on the fumble to give Ohio State the ball back on the Illinois 24.

Six plays later and Ohio State was threatening to score with a first-and-goal from the Illini 2-yard line. On that play, wide receiver Jeremiah Smith lined out wide to the right of Sayin. Just after Sayin took the snap, Smith stuttered at the top of his route, leaving Illinois cornerback Juice Clarke in the dust. The Buckeye quarterback then tossed a perfect pass to his favorite target, Smith, in the back corner for a 2-yard touchdown to give Ohio State a 24-point lead and its knockout punch of Illinois.

— Sam Cipriani

but he played a role in the team holding Luke Altmyer to 248 passing yards despite the veteran quarterback throwing the ball 44 times.

Sanchez's biggest issues came on the Fighting Illini's only first-half scoring drive in the second quarter. Illinois threw in his direction on back-to-back plays, and he gave up a 15-yard gain and an 8-yard gain.

Altmyer threw in the direction of Sanchez once again in the red zone, and although the freshman cornerback prevented senior receiver Justin Bowick from completing the catch in bounds, he was flagged for pass interference.

Sanchez's struggles didn't doom the Buckeyes, though. Instead, Illinois committed a false start penalty at the 1-yard line and had to settle for three points. Mathews said the Buckeyes' stand on third down helped the youngster's confidence.

"It was big," Mathews said. "He was kind of down a little bit, but he just has to keep going. We just have to keep talking to him. Davison (Igbinosun) played a lot as a freshman as well, so I think we just have that experience and knowledge that we can give to the younger guys."

Sanchez finished the game with five total tackles and a pass breakup. According to Igbinosun, he had a solid outing considering the circumstances.

"I think it was good," Igbinosun said of Sanchez's performance. "He's a true freshman. People don't understand how hard it is to start as a true freshman in college football. He's going to learn from it and grow."

Mathews agreed with Igbinosun's assessment of how difficult it is to make an impact as a true freshman and said the most difficult adjustment can be dealing with the tough road crowds in the Big Ten.

"(Devin) probably never played in this type of environment. Devin was from Texas, though. I know y'all know about Texas football. His stadium probably looks like this one," Mathews said.

## **OSU Takes Foot Off Gas In Fourth**

It's hard to complain about an 18-point win over a top-20 opponent, but Day wasn't completely thrilled with the way his team finished the game. After scoring 14 unanswered points to create their largest lead of the game at 34-10, the Buckeyes weren't as sharp in the final eight-plus minutes. In addition to stalling on a drive that started with just over 10 minutes to go, the Buckeyes allowed Illinois to march down the field on a 61-yard touchdown drive and make the score a bit tighter than it should have been.

After a failed onside kick try by Illinois, Ohio State's backups failed to move the ball and had to punt after a three-and-out. The Buckeyes' struggles in the fourth quarter, of course, didn't change the outcome of an already decided game, but Day said he felt like his team took its foot off the pedal toward the end, which is not something he wants to see.

Donaldson said the ending of the game was a good reminder that good is not good enough at Ohio State.

"Definitely, we're the Ohio State Buckeyes," Donaldson said. "We strive to be great at everything we do. Good is not great enough here. That's something that we emphasize. We must be great here at Ohio State."

The fourth quarter that had Illinois outgain Ohio State 120-15 actually made it so that it wasn't pure jubilation in the visitors' locker room, even though the Buckeyes pulled off the top-20 win. Day even said after the game that he had to remind all of the players what a great win it was, because they felt like they had left something on the field.

Klare explained after the game that the Buckeyes are simply focused on how they can improve going forward.

"It was pretty good," Klare said of the vibes in the locker room. "Obviously, a win is a win, but we know we could have put

even a better foot forward there. There is still a lot to work on."

## **OSU Gives Up First Red Zone TD**

Ohio State's impenetrable defense finally cracked in the red zone in the win over Illinois. Including the red zone stop the Buckeyes had in the first half after Sanchez's penalty, Ohio State started the year with nine straight defensive stands without the opposing offense scoring a touchdown.

It wasn't until the third quarter that the Fighting Illini finally got the ball into the end zone with a red-zone trip, and even then, it took seven plays and some trickery for Illinois to put six points on the board.

After Illinois picked up 11 yards on its first two plays in the red zone, it had a first-and-goal at the Ohio State 9-yard line.

A 2-yard run by junior Kaden Feagin made it second-and-goal from the 7. Altmyer found receiver Hank Beatty on a dump-off at the line of scrimmage, and despite Mathews and Igbinosun making contact with him at the 3-yard line, he spun within an inch of the goal line.

The Buckeyes still showed resiliency, and on a third-and-goal play where Altmyer got in open space with the ball in his hands, senior linebacker Sonny Styles chopped him down and didn't allow him to fall forward into the end zone.

Unlike several other opponents of the Buckeyes over the past two seasons, Illinois did not test Ohio State's interior defensive line, even though it needed a couple of inches to score a touchdown. Instead, Altmyer handed the ball off to Beatty, who pitched it out to running back Aidan Laughery. Senior defensive end Caden Curry was ready for an outside run, but he was outnumbered by Beatty and Laughery and had to watch as Illinois finally got in the end zone.

The Buckeyes gave up another red-zone touchdown in the fourth quarter, although the game was already decided at that point.

Trailing 34-10 with only 4:28 left, the Fighting Illini were able to get down to Ohio State's 4-yard line after Mathews committed pass interference. From there, Altmyer needed just one play to find sophomore receiver Collin Dixon for the touchdown.

Although the Buckeyes gave up the two touchdowns in the red zone, their red-zone stop in the first half and overall resiliency close to the goal line had Igbinosun still proud of the fight of his unit inside the 20-yard line.

"We train for situations like that in practice," Igbinosun said. "On that (second-quarter goal-line stand), they called the touchdown back. We thrive down there in the red zone. We were ecstatic that we had an opportunity to play more defense."



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# BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 34, Illinois 16

**Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on the Buckeyes' play early in the game:** "To be (winning) 20-3 going into halftime against a good opponent – and we all know that coming to a noon kickoff in conference against a very good team, 11 a.m. (Central) kickoff, we all know the concern is that you show up and you don't have a lot of energy. I don't think that was the case at all. I thought we did come in with good energy. I thought I liked the way we played early."

**Illinois head coach Bret Bielema on how the first half set the stage for the Illini loss:** "Obviously, going into this game, we had some really high aspirations and hopes, and (the Illinois fans) showed up in a great way. Unfortunately, our first-half performance didn't match that. I think offensively, defensively and special teams, there were some things that we had hoped to capitalize on. We just weren't able to do that. But I did think going in the locker room at halftime, as bad as that first half was with the turnovers, the unique downing of the punt, to give up several possessions inside the plus-50 and to have as few points (as we did), I thought that might give us a little bit of hope, but we just weren't able to really ever get anything going."

**Senior Ohio State cornerback Davison Igbinosun on what it felt like to have four pass breakups:** "It definitely feels good. I train hard each day at practice, so I'm glad I'm getting an opportunity to showcase my ability on the big stage."

**Junior Ohio State defensive tackle Kayden McDonald on senior defensive tackle Tywone Malone Jr. playing well in the win:** "My big bro. I'm so proud of him and with him, he's just got to keep working and staying in the film room together and just keep working."

**McDonald on this year's defense stepping into last season's roles:** "We've shown

that we can play. It doesn't matter if people go to the NFL. The older guys, we've got to step up."

**Junior Ohio State cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. on if his preparation or instincts have more to do with his play-making:** "I think it's all in one. I think it's preparation, it's my instincts, it's how I play the game. But I think preparing is big, knowing your opponent and knowing how they're going to try to attack you."

**Igbinosun on Mathews moving to nickel:** "Jermaine is that boy. Jermaine can play outside or inside. He's just a natural football player. I wasn't surprised that he played well. I see it every day at practice."

**Senior Ohio State running back CJ Donaldson Jr. on the pace of play of the offense:** "I definitely like where we are right now, but there's something that Coach says: 'We've always got to upgrade.' So tomorrow morning we're going to wake up, we're going to enjoy the night, but we're going to wake up and throw it all away and upgrade. That's something we always emphasize, continue to upgrade."

**Junior Ohio State tight end Max Klare on the shovel pass to him in the second quarter on a third down the Buckeyes didn't convert:** "We put that in this week. We worked on it a decent amount. We wished it would've worked a little bit better, but they defended it well."

**Day on unselfishness being an advantage for Ohio State:** "I think the last thing is, and this is going to be a challenge for every team in the country, including ours, is just as time goes on, everyone has expectations when they come into a game. When they're not met, it's easy to start pulling in different directions and that selfishness. I think our guys are very unselfish, I think they're coming together as a

team, and that's going to be one of the things that we have to make sure is an advantage for us."

**Ohio State quarterback Julian Sayin on balancing the want to be perfect while realizing this is a top-20 win on the road:** "The coaches were talking about how this is a great win. We got closer as a team on this trip. There's definitely some stuff we want to clean up. Every game you have stuff you want to clean up. I felt like we left a couple of things out there, but the good plays that we did make were awesome to see. We're going to keep building on this. It's always tough to get a win on the road in this conference. We're going to enjoy the win and then come home on Sunday and watch the tape and get better."

**Sayin on heading to Wisconsin next week:** "We have some stuff to clean up. We did see some good things today, but it's all about on to the next week. It was awesome to get a road win, but it's on to next week."

**McDonald on the Buckeyes' first half of the season:** "Well it just feels like a roller coaster. Just coming to work every week, and practice makes perfect. If you have a good practice, you're going to have to play well in the game."

**Bielema on the state of the Ohio State football program:** "I don't need to give Ohio State any advice. They're doing really good. They're ranked No. 1 in the country. They're a pretty good football team. They have a lot of good talent. Their coach is exceptional. They have a lot of really good players. Their kicking game doesn't have any flaws. Usually in my experience, when you get teams like that, you can find something, but they just, last week that punt scheme they ran like, they're very creative. I think Ryan Day keeps them on edge. I'm excited because they're a Big Ten team and I think they can do a lot of things nationally that continue to make our conference what it is."

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# Buckeyes Make Meal Of Illini Turnovers

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ohio State defense giveth (season-high in points) and taketh (three turnovers that led to 21 points) when the top-ranked Buckeyes downed No. 17 Illinois 34-16 at Gies Memorial Stadium in Champaign, Ill., on Oct. 11.

CJ Donaldson Jr. ran for two scores, and Julian Sayin threw for two more for the Buckeyes (6-0, 3-0) on a sunny, 67-degree afternoon before a crowd of 60,670.

Donaldson's 2-yard run in the third quarter made it 27-10, and Jeremiah Smith's 2-yard reception upped the lead to 34-10 early in the fourth quarter before a late Illini (5-2, 2-2) score.

The defense had allowed only 25 points previously, with Ohio scoring a high of nine in the third game. That was also when the second of two TDs allowed this season occurred.

## Upon Further Review

The Buckeyes started at the 25 after a touchback on the opening kickoff, and they used 12 plays and took 5:25 off the clock but had to settle for a 26-yard field goal by Jayden Fielding.

They used the passing of Sayin to move down the field with completions of 11 yards to Brandon Inniss, 18 to Smith on a third-and-8 and 11 to Carnell Tate to the 33.

After an incompletion to Tate, Bo Jackson ran for 17 to the 16. He then gained 6 yards on two separate rushes before a 2-yard catch up the middle by tight end Max Klare forced the field goal at the 9:35 mark.

On the Illini possession, they picked up a first down, but on third-and-5 from the 43, Jermaine Mathews Jr. broke up a pass intended for Hank Beatty, and the ball deflected to Payton Pierce at the 50. He returned it 15 yards to the 35. It was Luke Altmeyer's first INT of the season.

Six plays and 3:15 later, it was 10-0 with 3:40 remaining in the first quarter when Donaldson punched it in from the 1 through the massive hole created by the left side of the line. Donaldson began the drive with carries of 5 and 10. Smith hauled in a 13-yarder to the 7. James Peoples gained 3, and Donaldson pushed his way to less than a yard from the goal then scored on the next play.

Illinois came out firing in response from its 20. Aidan Laughery ran outside to his left for 16 yards. The Buckeyes then got away without an interference call on cornerback Davison Igbinosun at the OSU 15 when the pass to Justin Bowick was incomplete as he grabbed his jersey.

After a 37-yard punt to the OSU 27, Tate kept the drive alive on third-and-9 with an 11-yard catch. An illegal forward pass to Klare set the Buckeyes back 5 yards, but Jackson gained 11 of it back to end a quarter in which OSU outgained the Illini 125-34 with Sayin going 6 of 9 for 66 yards.

On the first play of the second quarter, a 32-yard completion to Smith to the 23 was overruled after a lengthy review because he did not maintain possession after being hit.

Joe McGuire punted 39 yards to the Illini 16, and on first down, Igbinosun was



SONNY BROCKWAY

**PRESSURE — Ohio State seemed to be in the Illinois backfield the entirety of the Buckeyes' 34-16 win on Oct. 11 with quarterback Luke Altmeyer (9) sacked four times and losing a fumble. He also threw his first interception of the season.**

flagged for pass interference to the 26. Beatty caught a ball for 8, Kaden Feagin ran for 5 and Beatty made another catch for 8. Later, Jordan Anderson got 1 on the ground to set up fourth-and-1 before Feagin picked up the yard to move the chains to the Illini 49.

Facing a third-and-7, Altmeyer ran out of the pocket to complete a 9-yarder to the left sideline to Cole Rusk at the OSU 39, but a review canceled it because he had not re-established himself inbounds after being pushed out by Igbinosun.

It was a huge play because punter Kee-elan Crimmins went to his knee to take a low snap and downed himself at the Illinois 38, turning the ball over on downs to the Buckeyes in prime scoring position.

Klare began the drive with a catch-and-run for 10 yards, and Tate followed with an 11-yarder to the 17. But the drive stalled again when Jackson carried for 4, Sayin gained nothing on his run, and he then threw incomplete to Tate. Fielding made a field goal from 31 yards for a 13-0 lead with 6:43 left before the half.

On Illinois' first play after the kickoff, Kayden McDonald ripped the ball from Ca'Lil Valentine at the 25, and he recovered the fumble for the Buckeyes at the Illini 26. The play withstood a review.

From there, on third-and-6, Smith took in a 7-yard toss to the 15, but Peoples immediately lost 2 yards.

After an OSU timeout, Sayin looked downfield, couldn't find anyone open and threw back to his left to Jackson at the 19. With Klare leading the way, he ran into the end zone to make it 20-0 on the 17-yard play with 3:48 to go.

Illinois went tempo with success, not allowing OSU to change personnel or schemes, and reached the 1 before deciding to kick a 24-yard field goal by David Olano to make it 20-3 with 1:05 left.

Hudson Clement made catches for 17 and 15 on consecutive plays, and Collin

Dixon's 8-yard reception put the ball on the OSU 40. Feagin rushed for 9, and Anderson's catch went for 6 to the 25.

After the 2:00 stoppage, Altmeyer went to Clement for 5 and 4. The Illini thought they had a 16-yard TD catch by Bowick, but the play was overturned because he caught the ball out of bounds at the back of the end zone. But freshman Devin Sanchez, replacing the injured Lorenzo Styles Jr., was called for pass interference on the play, placing the ball on the 2.

Altmeyer tried to run outside but suffered a 2-yard loss on a tackle by Caden Curry, and Laughery caught a 3-yard pass to reach the 1. On third down, a false start moved the ball back to the 6, and Altmeyer threw incomplete to set up the three-pointer.

The Buckeyes continued their streak of not conceding a first-half touchdown or allowing a TD in the red zone in nine tries by opponents this season.

In the half that would not end, the Buckeyes went three-and-out, and McGuire's weak 34-yard punt gave the Illini the ball at their 40 with 30 seconds left. On third down, Kenyatta Jackson Jr. and Arvell Reese combined for an 8-yard sack to send the teams to their locker rooms.

Ohio State totaled 182 yards (117 passing, 65 rushing) to 106 (89 passing, 17 rushing) for the Illini. Sayin was 12 of 18 and a TD while Altmeyer was 12 of 21.

## Finish It Out

The red-zone streak ended, as did that of not allowing a rushing TD this season, on Illinois' opening drive in the third quarter, thanks to a 75-yard, 12-play, 4:54 drive that culminated in a tricky 1-yard run by Laughery on fourth down. But it wasn't easy.

Beatty had a catch for 13, Laughery ran for 23 to the OSU 37, and on third-and-10, Dixon hauled in a 17-yarder to the 20. From there, Rusk's catch gained 9, Feagin ran for 4 on two carries before a Beatty catch of 6

yards placed the ball just inside the 1. On third down, Altmeyer was stopped for no gain by Sonny Styles. On fourth, Altmeyer handed the ball to Beatty, who ran right, then pitched the ball to Laughery on the option for the score, cutting the OSU lead to 20-10.

The Buckeyes quieted the crowd with a series that took 7:52 and went 63 yards, with the 14th play a 2-yard run for the score by Donaldson that made it 27-10 with 2:08 remaining in the third quarter.

Klare had a catch for 22, and on third-and-1 from the 33, tight end Will Kacmarek took a pass from Sayin for 7. On the next play, Smith, on an end-around, ran for 3 but landed upside down and temporarily left the game.

Donaldson gained 8, and Jackson's 3-yard reception spotted the ball at the 12. It was fourth-and-1 from the 6 when Sayin sneaked for 3 with the help of his linemen pushing him. Donaldson ran for 2, lost 1, then finally scored on the third try.

The Buckeyes took advantage of another turnover to go ahead 34-10 with 13:25 to play, with Smith scoring on a 2-yard pass at the end of a seven-play, 24-yard, 3:08 drive that came after Altmeyer was sacked for 6 yards by Mathews and his fumble was recovered by Curry.

Tate had an 8-yard catch, and Donaldson added two 4-yard runs, the second of which ended the third quarter at the 8. Donaldson opened the fourth with a 5-yarder to the 3, and tight end Nate Roberts on third-and-1 powered his way for the needed yard prior to the TD pass to Smith in the right corner.

Coming off a 37-yard McGuire punt, Altmeyer's 4-yarder to Dixon made it 34-16 after the missed two-point conversion with 4:25 to play. The drive took nine plays and 4:07 to go 61 yards. Dixon had a 17-yard catch to start the series, and a pass interference on Mathews gave the Illini a first down at the 4, and they scored on the ensuing play.

The Buckeyes recovered the onside kick at the Illinois 45 but ran three plays and punted. Illinois moved from its 20 to the OSU 25, where a fourth-down pass fell incomplete with 1:05 to play, and Sayin took two knees for a loss of 3 yards to end the game.

"I thought we played well there in toward the end of the third, into the fourth, and then we took our foot off the pedal a little bit and lost our focus," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said.

Sayin was 19 of 27 for 166 yards, Smith had five catches for 42 yards, and Bo Jackson ran for 47 yards on 10 carries.

## Notes

The Buckeyes gained 106 of their total yards on the ground with a 2.9 yards per carry. ... The Illini had 295 total yards, with Altmeyer getting 248 yards by completing 30 of 44. The Illini's 47 rushing yards averaged 1.7. ... Donaldson's 44 yards came on 13 runs. ... Tate had four catches for 41 yards, and Klare's four went for 38 yards. ... OSU was 8 of 15 on third down; Illinois was 4 of 14. ... The Buckeyes had four sacks for 26 yards while Illinois had none. Arvell Reese led the way with 1½ sacks while Sonny Styles had 10 tackles.



# The Numbers Game

## Ohio State 34, Illinois 16

Oct. 11, 2025 – Gies Memorial Stadium, Champaign, Ill.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
OHIO STATE	10	10	7	7	34
ILLINOIS	0	3	7	6	16

### First Quarter

**OSU** – Fielding, 26-yard field goal, 9:35.

**OSU** – Donaldson Jr., 1-yard rush (Fielding kick), 3:40.

### Second Quarter

**OSU** – Fielding, 31-yard field goal, 6:43.

**OSU** – Jackson, 17-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 3:48.

**ILL** – Olano, 24-yard field goal, 1:05.

### Third Quarter

**ILL** – Laughery, 1-yard rush (Olano kick), 10:06.

**OSU** – Donaldson Jr., 2-yard rush (Fielding kick), 2:08.

### Fourth Quarter

**OSU** – Smith, 2-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 13:25.

**ILL** – Dixon, 4-yard pass from Altmeyer (Altmeyer pass failed), 4:25.

**Att.** – 60,670

**Weather** – Sunny, 67 F

### Team Statistics

	OSU	ILL
First Downs	17	22
Rushing	6	7
Passing	11	12
Penalty	0	3
Rushes-Yards	37-106	27-47
Passing Yards	166	248
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	19-27-0	30-44-1
Offensive Plays	64	71
Total Net Yards	272	295
Third Down Efficiency	8-15	4-14
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-1	3-5
Punts-Avg.	4-37.8	2-41.0
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	2-2
Penalties	7-59	4-19
Time of Possession	33:11	26:49

### Individual Statistics

**RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.)** – **OSU**: Jackson 10-47; Donaldson Jr. 13-44; Peoples 5-7; West 3-4; Sayin 2-3; Smith 1-3; Roberts 1-1; Team 2-(-3). **ILL**: Laughery 8-50; Feagin 6-22; Valentine 3-6; Anderson 3-3; Crimmins 1-(-14); Altmeyer 6-(-20).

**PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD)** – **OSU**: Sayin 19-27-0-166-2. **ILL**: Altmeyer 30-44-1-248-1.

**RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.)** – **OSU**: Smith 5-42; Tate 4-41; Klare 4-38; Jackson 2-20; Inniss 2-14; Kacmarek 1-7; Donaldson Jr. 1-4. **ILL**: Beatty 7-48; Clement 6-47; Rusk 5-68; Dixon 4-46; Laughery 4-12; Anderson 3-12; Bowick 1-15.

**PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long)** – **OSU**: McGuire 4-37.8-41. **ILL**: Crimmins 2-41.0-45.

**PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** – **OSU**: Inniss 1-(-2). **ILL**: None.

**KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** – **OSU**: Inniss 1-37. **ILL**: Anderson 1-20; Sanders II 1-14.

**FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.)** – **OSU**: Curry 1-0; McDonald 1-0. **ILL**: None.

**INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.)** – **OSU**: Pierce 1-15. **ILL**: None.

**SACKS (No.-Yds.)** – **OSU**: Reese 1.5-14; Mathews Jr. 1-6; Curry 1-2; Jackson Jr. 0.5-4. **ILL**: None.

**TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.)** – **OSU**: Reese 1.5-14; Jackson Jr. 1.5-6; Mathews Jr. 1-6; Curry 1-2; Pierce 0.5-1; Sitanilei 0.5-0. **ILL**: Durojaiye 1.5-1; Bailey 1-2; Hayden 0.5-1; Jacas 0.5-1.

**TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.)** – **OSU**: Styles 8-2-10; Reese 8-1-9; Downs 7-2-9; Sanchez 4-1-5; Malone 4-0-4; Pierce 2-2-4; McClain 2-1-3; McDonald 1-2-3; Igbinosun 2-0-2; Curry 2-0-2; Scott Jr. 2-0-2; Jackson Jr. 1-1-2; Moore 0-2-2; Smith Jr. 0-2-2; West 1-0-1; Mathews Jr. 1-0-1; Stover 1-0-1; Atkinson 0-1-1; Sitanilei 0-1-1. **ILL**: Bailey 7-1-8; Thompson Jr. 5-2-7; Hood 3-2-5; Cox Jr. 4-0-4; Jacas 2-2-4; Hayden 2-2-4; Odeluga 3-0-3; Rosiek 2-1-3; Scott 2-1-3; Clarke 2-1-3; Durojaiye 1-2-3; Ja. Kreutz 1-2-3; Heckel 2-0-2; Karriem 2-0-2; Altmeyer 1-0-1; Barna 1-0-1; Neal 1-0-1; Lowery 0-1-1; McCullom 0-1-1.

**PLAYERS IN THE GAME** – **OSU**: Inniss, Sayin, Tate, Jackson, Smith, Montgomery, Siereveld, McDaffan, Hinzman, Tshabola, Klare, Styles, Igbinosun, McClain, Downs, Sanchez, Mathews Jr., Reese, Curry, Malone, Jackson Jr., McDonald, Delane, West, Donaldson Jr., Lockhart, Atkinson, Thurman, Alford, Pettijohn, Peoples, Stover, Pierce, Roker, West, Fielding, Velazquez, McGuire, Ferlmann, Sitanilei, Rudzinski, Scott Jr., Smith Jr., VanSickle, Padilla, Terry, Moore, Daniels, Onianwa, Adolph, Roberts, Kacmarek, Moore. **ILL**: Bowick, Dixon, Valentine, Priestly, Jo. Kreutz, Gesky, Davis, Henderson, Beatty, Arkin, Altmeyer, Scott, Hekcel, Jacas, Rosiek, McCullom, Hood, Cox Jr., Clarke, Bailey, Lowery, Thompson Jr., Resetich, Sanders II, Patterson, Clement, Rusk, Lovett Jr., Vartolotta, Rooks, Karriem, Hollins, Strain, Laughery, Anderson, Olano, Kante, Feagin, Bryant, Hayden, Beerman, Griffin, Durojaiye, Odeluga, Brown, Crimmins, Ja. Kreutz, Barna, Mahoney III, Farrell, John, McMillen, Hansen, Capka-Jones, Tuerk, Warren, Abney, Stoffel, Hunt, Coenen, Neal.

## 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	(1) at Washington	W, 24-6	72,458	
Oct. 4	(1) MINNESOTA	W, 42-3	105,114	
Oct. 11	(1) at Illinois (17)	W, 34-16	60,670	
Oct. 18	(1) at Wisconsin	3:30 p.m.		
Nov. 1	PENN STATE	TBA		
Nov. 8	at Purdue	TBA		
Nov. 15	UCLA	TBA		
Nov. 22	RUTGERS	TBA		
Nov. 29	at Michigan	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	131	83
Rushing	52	37
Passing	74	37
Penalty	5	9
Average Per Game/Rush	160.7	84.0
Average Per Game/Pass	260.8	145.0
Total Offense	2529	1374
Total Plays	367	353
Average Per Game	421.5	229.0
Average Per Play	6.9	3.9
Penalties-Yards	27-234	27-198
Fumbles-Lost	3-1	5-5
Third Down Efficiency	34-63	17-78
Percentage	54%	22%
Fourth Down Efficiency	4-7	8-18
Percentage	54%	44%
Sacks-Yards	18-113	2-12
Time Of Possession Avg.	32:07	27:53

Score								
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.	
Ohio State	41	62	52	66	0	221	36.8	
Opponents	3	9	16	13	0	41	6.8	

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Bo Jackson	58	407	7.0	2	64
CJ Donaldson Jr.	58	237	4.1	6	27
James Peoples	40	202	5.1	0	33
Isaiah West	12	49	4.1	1	12
Lincoln Kienholz	6	23	3.8	1	8
Jeremiah Smith	2	20	10.0	1	17
Carnell Tate	2	16	8.0	0	8
Julian Sayin	14	10	0.7	0	12
Sam Dixon	3	9	3.0	1	6
Brandon Inniss	1	8	8.0	0	8
Nate Roberts	1	1	1.0	0	1
Team	7	-18	-2.6	0	0
OSU Totals	204	964	4.7	12	64
OPP Totals	186	504	2.7	1	34

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Julian Sayin	120	153	78.4	1479	15-3	188.1
Lincoln Kienholz	7	8	87.5	86	1-0	219.1
Tavien St. Clair	0	2	0.0	0	0-0	0.0
OSU Totals	127	163	77.9	1565	16-3	187.3
OPP Totals	101	166	60.8	870	3-3	107.2

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Jeremiah Smith	40	505	12.6	7	87
Carnell Tate	28	476	17.0	4	49
Max Klare	15	175	11.7	1	29
Brandon Inniss	11	87	7.9	0	12
Bo Jackson	6	57	9.5	1	17
Will Kacmarek	5	74	14.8	1	47
CJ Donaldson Jr.	5	30	6.0	1	9
Jelani Thurman	5	59	11.8	1	26
James Peoples	5	27	5.4	0	10
Bennett Christian	2	7	3.5	0	6
Bryson Rodgers	2	22	11.0	0	21
David Adolph	1	8	8.0	0	8
Mylan Graham	1	23	23.0	0	23
Phillip Bell	1	15	15.0	0	15
OSU Totals	127	1565	12.3	16	87
OPP Totals	101	870	8.6	3	67

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Jeremiah Smith	8	-	-	-	-	48
Jayden Fielding	-	25-25	-	-	6-7	43
CJ Donaldson Jr.	7	-	-	-	-	42
Carnell Tate	4	-	-	-	-	24
Bo Jackson	3	-	-	-	-	18
Will Kacmarek	1	-	-	-	-	6
Max Klare	1	-	-	-	-	6

Lincoln Kienholz	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jelani Thurman	1	-	-	-	-	6
Sam Dixon	1	-	-	-	-	6
Riley Pettijohn	1	-	-	-	-	6
Isaiah West	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jackson Courville	-	4-4	-	-	-	4
OSU Totals	29	29-29	-	-	6-7	221
OPP Totals	4	2-3	-	-	5-7	41

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Jayden Fielding	3-3	3-3	0-0	0-1	6-7
OSU Totals	3-3	3-3	0-0	0-1	6-7
OPP Totals	4-4	0-1	1-2	0-0	5-7

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Joe McGuire	13	532	40.9	0	55
Nick McLarty	1	45	45.0	0	45
OSU Totals	14	577	41.2	0	55
OPP Totals	30	1341	44.7	0	58

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Payton Pierce	1	15	15.0	0	15
J. Mathews Jr.	1	5	5.0	0	5
Caleb Downs	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	3	20	6.7	0	15
OPP Totals	3	4	1.3	0	4

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Brandon Inniss	6	74	12.3	0	32
Lorenzo Styles Jr.	1	36	36.0	0	36
Jeremiah Smith	1	-6	-6.0	0	0
OSU Totals	8	104	13.0	0	36
OPP Totals	1	3	3.0	0	3

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Brandon Inniss	3	57	19.0	0	37
OSU Totals	3	57	19.0	0	37
OPP Totals	7	134	19.1	0	41

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Arvell Reese	19	19	38	4.5-23	4.5-23
Sonny Styles	21	16	37	1.5-2	0-0
Caden Curry	20	11	31	9.5-42	6.0-37
Caleb Downs	18	10	28	2.0-2	0-0
Kayden McDonald	13	13	26	6.0-25	3.0-20
Davison Igbinosun	14	12	26	0.5-0	0-0
Jaylen McClain	19	5	24	0-0	0-0
Payton Pierce	7	16	23	1.5-2	0-0
Lorenzo Styles Jr.	10	7	17	1.5-1	0-0
Tywayne Malone	6	5	11	0-0	0-0
J. Mathews Jr.	9	2	11	1.5-7	1.0-6
Will Smith Jr.	4	6	10	0-0	0-0
K. Jackson Jr.	3	5	8	3.5-12	1.5-8
Beau Atkinson	3	5	8	2.5-12	1.0-9
Devin Sanchez	5	2	7	0-0	0-0
C.J. Hicks	2	4	6	1.0-1	0-0
Riley Pettijohn	2	3	5	0-0	0-0
Aaron Scott Jr.	5	-	5	0-0	0-0
Zion Grady	3	2	5	2.0-12	1.0-10
Garrett Stover	4	1	5	0-0	0-0
Eddrick Houston	-	5	5	0-0	0-0
Joshua Mickens	1	2	3	0-0	0-0
TJ Alford	1	2	3	1.0-2	0-0
Bryce West	3	-	3	0-0	0-0
Faheem Delane	2	1	3	0-0	0-0
Eli Lee	-	2	2	0-0	0-0
Malik Hartford	1	1	2	0-0	0-0
Eric Mensah	-	2	2	0-0	0-0
Logan George	2	-	2	0-0	0-0
Jason Moore	-	2	2	0-0	0-0
Leroy Roker	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
Dominic Kirks	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
James Peoples	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Jayden Fielding	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Carnell Tate	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Epi Sitanilei	-	1	1	0.5-0	0-0
Jarquez Carter	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
OSU Totals	201	164	365	39.0-143	18.0-113
OPP Totals	216	152	368	14.0-26	2.0-12

**Fumbles Forced:** McDonald (2), Mathews Jr., Pettijohn, Styles.  
**Fumbles Recovered:** Curry, McDonald, Pettijohn, Sanchez, Sitanilei.



# George Scored Game-Winner Over PSU In '95

*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 28-25 win over Penn State on Oct. 7, 1995.*

**By MARCUS HARTMAN**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The fifth game of the 1995 season was not the best of Eddie George's that fall.

It was still one of the most memorable.

How else to describe a Philadelphia native scoring the game-winning touchdown in front of a hostile Penn State crowd on a 70-degree day in central Pennsylvania?

"What a great victory for the Buckeyes," said Ohio State head coach John Cooper. "I don't believe I've ever coached a team in tough conditions like this, fought off all the adversity and came back and won this game, and obviously in my opinion deserved to win the ballgame."

## George Comes Through With Chips Down

Ohio State went into Happy Valley with a lot of weapons on offense, and the fifth-ranked Buckeyes needed them all to come out with a 28-25 win on Oct. 7, 1995.

Quarterback Bobby Hoying threw for 354 yards and three touchdowns. Fellow senior Rickey Dudley caught five passes for 97 yards and a touchdown, and junior Terry Glenn continued his stellar start to the season with nine catches for 175 yards and two scores.

Hoying hit Buster Tillman for 13 yards to convert a third-and-10 with the game-winning drive hanging in the balance. Then he threaded a pass down the middle between two defenders to Dudley, who hauled it in for 32 yards at the Penn State 13.

That left George to finish off the Nittany Lions. He went over left tackle for 7 yards, following fullback Nicky Sualua and getting blocks from Dudley and left tackle Orlando Pace. That worked well enough, so offensive coordinator Joe Hollis dialed it up again. This time George swept around left end and glided up the sideline to score with 1:42 left.

"I was thinking I've got to get it in some way, somehow – the surest way," George said. "On Nicky and Rick's blocks, they pushed their guys out of the way. I found a seam and hit it."

Hoying had no doubt that's how the drive would wrap.

"When Rickey makes that catch, I really thought we had it," the quarterback said. "We didn't want to do anything to jeopardize our chances, so we gave it to Eddie. He re-

ally wanted to score to seal the game, and he did it."

## George Mostly Held In Check By Lions

George finished the day with 105 yards on 24 carries.

He also caught five passes for 38 yards and overcame an early fumble at the end of one of those receptions.

"I caught the pass, turned around and I was held up," George said. "The safety came in and put his head on the ball, and it was a good hit and it just came out. That's going to happen. Things like that are going to happen."

Cooper didn't seem bothered by the fumble or the Nittany Lions holding George to 105 yards after he had gone over 200 a week earlier in a high-stakes win over Notre Dame.

"I don't think for Eddie this was his best ballgame, but Eddie gained a lot of yards against a very tough defense," Cooper said. "The defense, I think, was stacked to stop Eddie George. There's no question they were keying on him, and we've got to get more production out of that fullback to keep people from doing that."

George might have had another fumble in the third quarter, but officials ruled him down.

While Cooper said he had no doubt his tailback was down, Penn State head coach Joe Paterno said it didn't even matter to him.

"Football is a game of ifs, ands and buts, and official calls are one of them," Paterno said. "If you've been in it as long as I have, you've had them go your way and go against you. I'm sure the guy wanted to call it the right way, and I don't know if he did or he didn't."

"But if he blew it, he blew it. We've had breaks like that before. You have to be careful that you don't cry that much about it."

The call, right or wrong, turned out to be big because Hoying hit Glenn for a 37-yard touchdown on the next play to put Ohio State ahead 21-10.

"Oh, he was down," Cooper said. "There's no doubt in my mind. It happened right in front of me. I didn't think there was any question about it. Of course, I didn't see instant replay. I'm going to tell you what, though, Penn State's defense is very scrappy. I'm telling you, they flew around. That's the best defensive game they've played so far this year in my opinion – we've seen all the tapes of them."

Penn State was far from beaten, though. A 63-14 winner over the Buckeyes on the same field a year earlier, the 12th-ranked Nittany Lions mounted two long scoring drives to regain the lead.

Fullback Jon Witman capped both of them with 1-yard touchdown runs, and Wally Richardson hit Joe Jurevicius for a two-point conversion following the first.

That 15-0 run by the defending Big Ten champions put the Buckeyes' backs to the wall, and they responded like a team looking to prove it was capable of claiming the crown this time around.

"We've been in those situations before, like last year, where we wouldn't capitalize on it," George said. "Now is our chance to show how much we've grown or matured since then."

Cooper was in no mood to complain about the type of victory. He was just happy to be 5-0 after facing a schedule that included four ranked teams (No. 22 Boston College, No. 18 Washington, No. 15 Notre Dame and the Nittany Lions).

He was also aware perennial doormat Northwestern had upset Michigan that same Saturday afternoon.

"All you've got to do is win," Cooper said. "Just keep winning, baby."

## OSU Offense Rolls Due To George

Paterno was among those to come out of the game with admiration for the offensive machine assembled by assistants Hollis and Walt Harris for Cooper, who was in his eighth season in Columbus but hadn't had a scoring unit like this.

"We did a good job against them defensively, I thought," Paterno said. "You're dis-

appointed in the first half when you give up the two bombs – one was a third-and-10 play and one was third-and-15, but I think as far as playing tough, I think we're playing pretty tough. They didn't jam the ball down our throats. Eddie George is an excellent back, their line is pretty good, and you can't just jam it up in there because they can take it outside."

George eclipsed the century mark on the ground for the fourth game in a row and 12th time in his career.

He ran his season's totals to 745 yards on 133 carries while also ranking tied for second on the team with 14 catches for 127 yards (third-most yards behind Glenn and Dudley).

By that time in the season, there was a lot of competition for top billing on the Ohio State offensive marquee, though none of the players seemed too worried about who got it.

"The chemistry, I think you have to start there," Hollis replied when asked about the key to the Buckeyes' offensive success. "The confidence our players have that they can go score. I told them at halftime that it sends chills through my body what we have. You can't coach chemistry, you can't coach togetherness, you can't coach heart. We've got some guys who have been here that have a few scars. To see them stick together and score was great."

## Buckeye Sports BulletinBoard

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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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# OSU Couldn't Contain Illinois' Juice In '07

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When Illinois unexpectedly defeated Ohio State, 28-21, on Nov. 10, 2007, the Buckeyes' 20-game winning streak in the Big Ten was snapped, and their BCS hopes were put in serious jeopardy. Meanwhile, the Illini landed one of their biggest wins in program history that paved the way for the program to make its first appearance in the Rose Bowl in over 20 years.

It only took three interceptions from Ohio State quarterback Todd Boeckman, a controversial fumble call, and one of the best performances of Illinois quarterback Isiah "Juice" Williams' career, but Illinois landed a huge win over No. 1-ranked Ohio State before 105,453 in Ohio Stadium.

With the Buckeyes extending their current winning streak over Illinois to 10 games on Oct. 11 with a 34-16 win, BSB sat down with 247Sports' Steve Helwagen, longtime Buckeye beat reporter Tim May and Kevin Noon of Buckeye Huddle to look back on the 2007 battle for the Illibuck trophy.

That Illinois team may be looked back on now as one of the best teams in Fighting Illini history, but coming into the Ohio State game, it didn't seem like they were capable of competing with the Buckeyes. Although the Fighting Illini had previously beaten solid Big Ten teams, including Wisconsin and Penn State, they came into Ohio State having lost two of their last three conference games.

"I really didn't give Illinois much of a shot," Noon said. "I mean, going into that game, they were 7-3 (overall) and 4-2 in the league. They weren't terrible, but Ohio State was the No. 1 team in the nation. People were already anointing them to go to the BCS championship game and everything else."

The Buckeyes had good reason to be 15½-point favorites. Head coach Jim Tressel's squad previously had defeated

all but one Big Ten foe on its schedule by at least 16 points and was coming off dominant victories over Wisconsin and Penn State.

Early on, the Buckeyes didn't give any reason for fans to doubt them. Within 23 seconds, Ohio State held a 7-0 lead after Boeckman completed a 65-yard pass to Brian Hartline and Chris "Beanie" Wells ran it in from 11 yards.

It didn't take long for Illinois to respond and set the tone offensively. On the second play from scrimmage, backup Illinois running back Daniel Dufrane ran 80 yards on an inside run to set up a game-tying touchdown. However, at the end of Dufrane's run, the ball slipped out of his grasp and into the end zone, where it either went out of bounds or was recovered by Ohio State. Either way, the Buckeyes should have had the ball at their own 20-yard line, but instead, the officials said Dufrane was down at the 3-yard line.

Much to the chagrin of Big Ten coordinator of officials Dave Parry, instant replay officials did not stop the game.

"Replay had just come into vogue," May said. "I don't remember the specifics of this, but somehow they missed the play from the standpoint of being able to review it. (Ball-spotting has) always been a question mark when it comes to officials. And there were several ball marks in that game that seemed very odd, or seemed quite generous for Illinois."

According to a story from The Columbus Dispatch, Tressel said after the game that the replay crew was having technical difficulties during the game, but Parry later said he didn't know anything about that.

Regardless, Illinois finished the drive with a touchdown. The Buckeyes didn't let the stroke of misfortune get them down. They marched down the field and retook the lead on a 19-yard rushing touchdown from Maurice Wells.

"Ohio State had a lead early in the first



FILE PHOTO

**ILL-FITTING — It was an unpleasant afternoon in Ohio Stadium on Nov. 10, 2007, for quarterback Todd Boeckman and No. 1-ranked Ohio State when Illinois upset the Buckeyes 28-21. The Illini have lost 10 straight in the series since. Boeckman went 13 of 23 for 156 yards and three interceptions.**

quarter," Noon said. "It looked like Ohio State was going to run away with it, putting up 14 points in the first five minutes of the game. It all kind of fell apart at that point."

The first sign of trouble came for the Buckeyes on their next offensive drive when the usually reliable Boeckman was picked off to set the Fighting Illini up in good field position. Illinois took advantage, tying the game on a 33-yard passing touchdown from Williams.

Williams, who went on to earn second-team All-Big Ten honors for the Fighting Illini a year later, wasn't really a known commodity yet in college football. He finished the 2007 season with just 1,743 passing yards, 13 touchdowns and 12 interceptions, and he had a modest completion percentage of 57.3.

Against the Buckeyes, though, Williams had no problems making plays with his arm. He threw for only 140 yards, on 12-of-22 passing but also threw for four touchdowns.

"I thought it was his best game as a collegiate player, because as the game went on, he got stronger and stronger," May said. "It was kind of like a boxing match where the other guy gets better as the boxing match goes on. He was a big dude, relatively speak-

ing, and wasn't known as being a pinpoint passer, by any stretch, but on that day, they had a couple of guys being wide open for at least a couple of those touchdown passes. So they had a great plan with him."

After a hot start to the game, the Buckeye offense came to a screeching halt in the second quarter. Ohio State totaled just 10 yards in the period.

The Buckeye defense held up for a while, but on their last drive of the first half, the Fighting Illini got All-America running back Rashard Mendenhall going. Mendenhall went for a 25-yard run before Williams threw his second touchdown, which put Illinois up 21-14.

"They had really good linebackers," Helwagen said of Ohio State's struggles to stop the run. "You would have had James Laurinaitis and Marcus Freeman playing in that game. Ordinarily, they were pretty strong against the run, but for whatever reason on that day, it just didn't click in for them."

The two noted Buckeye linebackers combined for 30 tackles in the game, with Freeman leading the way with 18, but delivered only 1½ tackles for loss combined.

The Buckeyes forced a three-and-out out of the halftime break and went all the way



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down the field on their next drive. Inside the 10-yard line, though, Illinois toughened up to bring up a third-and-goal from the 9-yard line, and it was then that Boeckman threw a ball in the direction of Ohio State receiver Ray Small, but the ball was batted up in the air and intercepted by Illinois linebacker Antonio Steele.

"It's almost like Illinois had its own secret plan for that game no one had seen because there were times when Boeckman and his receivers just seemed confused or bamboozled by what they were seeing," May said of Boeckman's struggles. "I know a couple times it seemed like the receiver went one way and the ball went the other, but it was just a tough game all the way around for Boeckman."

Boeckman's issues weren't a product of a lack of ability. He had a solid season as the team's starter, throwing for 2,379 yards and 25 touchdowns while completing 63.9 percent of his passes. According to Noon, Boeckman was simply forcing it a bit.

"He was trying so hard that sometimes you overtry and it all kind of falls apart," Noon said. "Boeckman just wasn't able to find a groove, and he had games where he looked very much in line with a lot of other really solid Ohio State quarterbacks at the time. Granted, it was a very different era. We're not talking about the type of quarterbacks we see now in the Ryan Day offense, but very costly interceptions in the game, including two in the second half, one of them being that final drive."

As they had done in the first half, Illinois took advantage of Boeckman's interception. After methodically going all the way down the field with its running game, Illinois again ended the drive passing the football. This time, Williams was able to find a wide-open Marques Wilson for a 31-yard touchdown, making it 28-14 with 3:52 left in the third quarter.

All hope was not completely lost for the Buckeyes. Beanie Wells ran for his second touchdown to pull Ohio State within seven points at the end of the third quarter. However, Illinois got the ball back and proceeded to run six minutes off the clock with an 11-play, 32-yard drive to begin the fourth.

With only 9:23 left in the game, the Buckeyes were in desperate need of a touchdown, but it took just three plays for Boeckman to throw his third interception. On the play, Boeckman looked down the field and threw a wobbly, underthrown pass in the direction of Brian Robiskie, and it was intercepted by Illinois safety Marcus Thomas.

"We had a deep ball called there," Boeckman said. "Brian and Brian were both running posts, and Hartline did his job beating (his man), and Robo was one-on-one. I just didn't get the ball far enough."

It was the last throw of the game for Boeckman, who finished the game 13 of 23 passing for 156 yards and no touchdowns.

Still with 8:09 left on the clock, few would have guessed the Buckeyes wouldn't be able to get the ball back, but that's exactly what happened.

To start the drive, the Buckeyes made things interesting by stopping the Fighting Illini on a third-and-1 run by Mendenhall. Ron Zook, Illinois' head coach at the time, even originally sent out his punt unit but was convinced by Williams to go for it on fourth down.

"I knew it was just an inch or less," Zook

said. "When they called timeout, Juice kind of grabbed me, and he said, 'I will get you an inch.' I said, 'You'd better.'"

Williams got him over a yard on that play, but his next conversion was even more impressive. On a third-and-7 play with five minutes left in the game, Williams picked up 12 on a quarterback draw.

"I don't want to say he was a better runner than he was a passer, but he was an outstanding runner," Helwage said of Williams. "He could find the chains, get the first down, and that was what was just amazing. Ohio State needed to get the ball back in those last few minutes to have a chance to try and win the game and just could never get it to happen. He just kept converting third downs, and it was just kind of a crazy happenstance, the way it all took place."

One might think the Buckeyes would have been ready for the quarterback run on the next third down, but when the Fighting Illini dialed up yet another draw for Williams on third-and-10 just over a minute later, the Buckeyes were unable to fill gaps, and the Fighting Illini signal-caller surged through a gaping hole to move the chains.

The Buckeyes weren't able to bring up another third down until there was only 2:19 left on the clock, and Illinois was in field-goal range. And on that third-and-2, the Juice got loose one last time to eradicate any hope Ohio State had of a perfect season. Although Freeman was in position to stop Williams on the play, he couldn't stop him from falling forward to pick up the game-ending first down.

After the game, even the eloquent Freeman, now the head coach at Notre Dame, found it hard to put the Buckeyes' defensive issues into words.

"It's tough because we had one of the best defenses in the nation going into today, and we feel we still do," Freeman said. "It's tough to give up that many points and that many yards (400)."

According to Noon, the reaction from fans after the game was understandably not pretty.

"People were pissed. It was, 'Here we go again,' because Ohio State won the title in 2002, but there was still very much this reputation that nobody beat Ohio State, like Ohio State beat Ohio State," Noon said. "I think people were kind of shell-shocked. There were people who were angry, and absolutely everybody thought, 'Well, that ruins any chances of getting to the BCS championship game.'"

The disappointment on senior day didn't bleed into The Game one week later. The No. 7-ranked Buckeyes were much improved defensively against Michigan. Tressel's group won that game 14-3.

With Ohio State's game against Illinois being only one week before The Game, both Helwage and Noon agreed that the Buckeyes may have overlooked Illinois.

"I think it's entirely possible that the Buckeyes were caught looking ahead on that one because not only did Illinois come out of nowhere to win that game, but it was just a total outlier. Jim Tressel's teams were pretty good in that situation, ordinarily, and for whatever reason, they just didn't have it that day."

May, on the other hand, pushed back slightly on the idea that the loss was a product of the Buckeyes looking ahead to The Game.

"This idea that Ohio State overlooked them might be a little bit of a stretch, because Ohio State took the lead early," May said. "Ohio State scored twice in the first quarter, so they didn't overlook them. Maybe after they got the lead, they then took it for granted, but how do you judge that?"

Although everyone counted the Buckeyes out of the national championship race, chaos continued down the stretch. Oregon, which was ranked as high as No. 2 in the BCS rankings, lost its last three games of the regular season. Kansas, which was ranked as high as No. 2, fell on the road against Missouri. That win propelled Missouri all the way up to No. 1 in the rankings, but the Tigers fell to Oklahoma in the Big 12 championship.

Most surprising of all, though, was that West Virginia, ranked No. 2 heading into the last week of the regular season, lost to a Pittsburgh team that finished the year with only five wins.

"Serendipity had to happen, and serendipity did happen," May said. "They beat Michigan and took care of business in that regard, and then it was, Hang on Sloopy,

what's going to happen next?"

After all of the dust fell on one of the more chaotic seasons in college football history, the Buckeyes were ranked No. 1. Ohio State's reward was playing a talented LSU squad in New Orleans for a chance at the national championship.

For the second year in a row, the Buckeyes weren't up to the task in the title game. Ohio State outgained LSU 353-326 but committed four turnovers in the 38-24 loss, with Boeckman throwing two interceptions.

Although Boeckman struggled in both games, Noon, Helwage and May agreed that the Buckeyes' issues weren't necessarily exposed by Illinois.

"Playing LSU in New Orleans is never going to be an easy thing," Noon said. "Ohio State was doing really well early in that game against LSU and then kind of had to abandon the run. When you're not able to sit there and utilize Beanie Wells, it's going to be problematic for you. I'm not going to say that there weren't things that weren't put on tape because of it. That's a very real part of the game, but that LSU team was pretty good."

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# OSU Barely Survives Wilson's Aerial Circus In 1980

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

There was a time in college football when quarterbacks throwing for 300 yards in a game was an anomaly.

For example, prior to the 1980 season, Ohio State quarterbacks had exactly one 300-yard passing day over the first 90 seasons in program history. That occurred in 1952 when John Borton threw for 312 yards during a 35-7 win against Washington State. Since that 1980 season, Borton's total has been eclipsed by OSU quarterbacks more than 50 times, rendering a 300-yard game almost routine nowadays.

But a 400-yard day or a 500-yard output? Those remain noteworthy headline-grabbers.

Imagine then, the still-unbelievable performance displayed on a crisp November 1980 afternoon in Ohio Stadium when Illinois quarterback Dave Wilson torched the Buckeyes for 621 yards through the air, a Big Ten-record passing performance that, despite the proliferation of the passing game in recent years, remains on the conference books some 45 years later.

After his team fell into a 28-0 hole midway through the second quarter, Illinois head coach Mike White decided to throw caution to the wind. Wilson, who had already attempted 32 passes in the first half, threw 37 more after halftime and nearly rallied his team from behind before the Buckeyes finally achieved a 49-42 victory.

"It was one of the wildest games ever played at the Horseshoe," OSU football historian Jack Park told BSB. "Mike White was in his first year as head coach at Illinois, and quite frankly they weren't very good. Add the fact that the Buckeyes had entered the game with the Big Ten's top-ranked pass defense, allowing just 525 passing yards and three touchdowns during their first five conference games, and no one could have predicted what eventually happened."

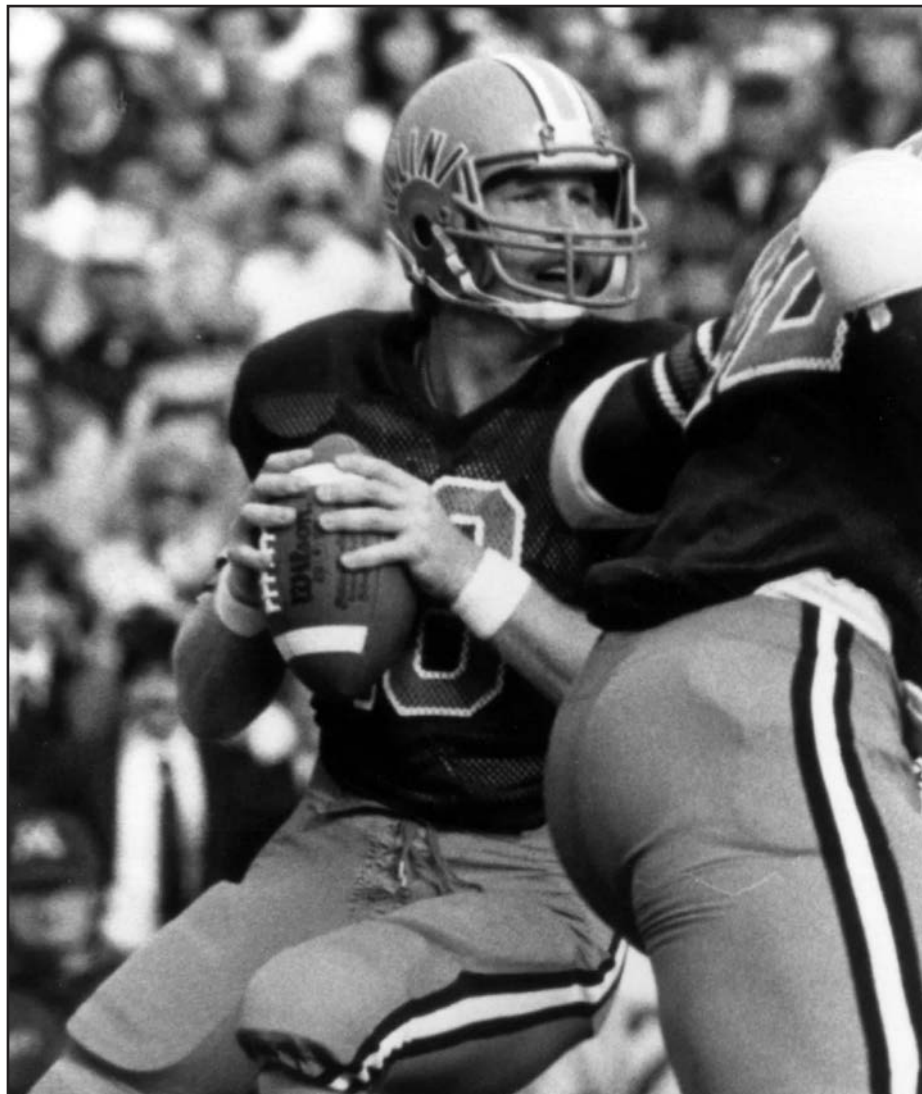
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FILE PHOTO

**AERIAL ASSAULT — Illinois quarterback Dave Wilson put on a show 45 years ago in Ohio Stadium in November 1980 when he threw for 621 yards, an NCAA record that has since been broken but still stands as the Big Ten record. He completed 43 of 69 for six touchdowns to nearly overcome a 35-7 third-quarter deficit before losing 49-42.**

During the 1970s, Ohio State's dominance over Illinois was nearly absolute. The Buckeyes won each of the 10 games the teams played against one another during the decade and won them by an average of 30 points. The talent gap was further revealed by the fact Woody Hayes and his team won or shared eight conference championships during the 1970s while Illinois finished the decade with no higher than a tie for third place in the league standings.

White, the fourth head coach at Illinois since the Illini last defeated the Buckeyes in 1967, came to the run-oriented Big Ten with a West Coast reputation of being more than willing to throw the ball. He had earned national honors in 1975 after leading California to its first Pacific-8 championship in 18 years and then spent a couple of seasons in the NFL, including one year on San Francisco 49ers head coach Bill Walsh's staff as an offensive assistant.

White also had a reputation for playing hard and fast with the rules, something that eventually caught up to him when he was forced to resign from Illinois after the 1987 season due to alleged recruiting violations.

Allegations of improprieties surrounded Wilson when he first got to the Illinois campus in the spring of 1980. A highly touted

quarterback known for his strong arm and quick release, Wilson attended Fullerton Junior College in his native California before White offered him a scholarship at Illinois. The JUCO transfer won the starting QB job in the spring over Tony Eason — another California JUCO transfer — and was primed to begin resurrecting the Illinois football program. That plan, though, came to a screeching halt over the summer when Wilson's academic transcripts were called into question.

What followed was a circus-like fiasco over his availability that once saw the NCAA rule Wilson ineligible on a Wednesday and then eligible again the following Saturday. By the time the Illini reached Columbus on the first weekend in November, the team was only 3-5-1 but Wilson had thrown for more than 2,000 yards.

"I remember that Friday after we went through our walk-through at Ohio Stadium," Wilson said. "Coach White brought us all in and basically said we were going to throw it 60-70 times the next day and that we should go out there and have fun. Throw it 60-70 times? That's music to any quarterback's ears."

White's game plan wasn't based as much on the confidence he had in his quarter-

back's ability as it was on reality. Injuries to running backs Mitchell Brookins (leg fracture), Mike Holmes (groin strain) and Wayne Strader (pinched nerve) had so depleted the rushing attack that backup quarterback Lance Hofer had been pressed into service in the backfield.

Illinois entered the game on a three-game losing streak during which it had been outscored by a 111-52 margin. Ohio State, on the other hand, was on a four-game winning streak, ranked No. 5 in the nation, and fresh off a 48-16 victory at Michigan State during which the Buckeyes had racked up 603 total yards of offense.

"Never in a million years could you have predicted what was going to happen in that game," former OSU quarterback Art Schlichter said. "I mean, their guy threw it 69 times. Are you kidding me? Sixty-nine times? It usually took me four games to throw 69 times."

## Fight To The Finish

Things began on a decidedly inauspicious note for Illinois in front of a sellout crowd of 87,952 at the Horseshoe when Wilson fumbled a handoff on the first play from scrimmage resulting in a 4-yard loss. Six plays later, the Illinois QB fumbled while being sacked by Ohio State linebacker Keith Ferguson with the loose ball recovered by cornerback Vince Skillings.

That gave the Buckeyes their first possession at the Illinois 43-yard line. The first two plays went nowhere, but on third-and-10, Schlichter found split end Gary Williams in the right flat where the speedy receiver made the catch before sprinting down the sideline and into the end zone. The 43-yard touchdown and subsequent PAT from kicker Vlade Jankievski gave the home team a 7-0 lead at the 10:47 mark of the first quarter.

Three more Ohio State touchdowns came in rapid succession — a 7-yard pass from Schlichter to flanker Doug Donley, a 2-yard plunge by fullback Tim Spencer, and a 7-yard pass from Schlichter to tight end Brad Dwelle.

With 8:37 remaining in the second quarter, the rout was seemingly on. The Buckeyes held a 28-0 lead, and Schlichter had completed each of his first 10 attempts for 190 yards and three scores. Meanwhile, Wilson had thrown for 146 yards to that point but had been sacked twice and committed two turnovers — a fumble and an interception.

"We were dominating that game," Skillings remembered. "We were moving up and down the field, and they weren't doing much of anything. And then ..."

Wilson finally got Illinois on the scoreboard late in the first half, directing a 60-yard drive that featured eight plays — all passes — and culminated in a 24-yard touchdown to flanker Greg Dentino, who made a twisting, leaping grab in the end zone to make it 28-7 with 1:29 remaining until the break.

If the Buckeyes were worried about their opponents making a comeback, it didn't show. Senior tailback Calvin Murray returned the second half's opening kickoff 48 yards into Illinois territory, and on the fifth



## OHIO STATE VS. ILLINOIS

play of the possession, Schlichter rolled right off play action and fired a 26-yard touchdown strike to Donley.

That gave Ohio State a comfortable 35-7 advantage at the 12:38 mark of the third quarter, a lead the Buckeyes figured to pad during the remainder of the afternoon. Except head coach Earle Bruce decided to take his foot off the gas pedal.

Bruce had told reporters before the game that he had a strategy to combat Wilson.

"If they start passing successfully on us," the coach said, "I'm going to take the ball and hold it. We'll run it and run the clock."

It was a strategy that nearly backfired.

"We jumped on them and were in total control," Schlichter said. "I think I completed something like 17 of my first 20 passes and had four touchdowns. They couldn't stop us. Then we never threw another pass for a quarter and a half. The next thing we knew, it was a one-score game in the fourth quarter."

While the Buckeyes went into an offensive shell, Wilson was just getting warmed up. He directed an 80-yard drive in just 1:28 to make it 35-13 (the PAT kick was blocked) and then parlayed a short field following an OSU fumble for another touchdown and two-point conversion to pull within 35-21 at the 6:41 mark of the third quarter.

That was followed by a three-and-out series from the Buckeyes after which Wilson used another short field to pull his team to within seven points at 35-28 with 2:31 still left to go in the third period.

Meanwhile, Ohio State was finding it difficult to get its offense back in gear. Schlichter led off the ensuing drive with a 3-yard keeper before Illinois free safety Joe Miles broke up a deep pass down the middle to tight end John Frank. Schlichter was then sacked on third down to force a punt, but the Buckeyes finally got a break when return man Dentino fumbled the kick.

OSU linebacker Glen Cobb recovered at the Illini 26 to tip a little momentum back to the Buckeyes.

"I didn't think much about it at the time, but looking back, that was pretty important for us," Cobb said. "At least it got our defense off the field and gave the offense pretty good field position for a change."

At first, it appeared the Buckeyes would squander the opportunity. On the first play of the fourth quarter, a holding call wiped out a first-down run from Schlichter and presented a third-and-18 dilemma for Ohio State. But on the next play – a quarterback draw – Illinois was caught grabbing Schlichter's face mask, a 15-yard penalty that gave the Buckeyes a first down at the Illini 16.

Two plays later, Murray took an option pitch around right end for a 13-yard touchdown, pushing OSU's lead back to 42-28 with 14:23 remaining in the game.

Wilson responded with an 83-yard scoring drive in nine plays to make it 42-35 at the 11:49 mark, and Schlichter answered that with a 72-yard march that took only six plays to give the Buckeyes a 49-35 advantage with 10:55 to go.

Back came the Illini again with Wilson connecting on a deep sideline pass to wide receiver Mike Martin, who appeared on his way to a 69-yard touchdown romp. But Skillings caught up to the Illinois receiver inside the 10-yard line and somehow dislodged the football from Martin's grasp. OSU cornerback Ray Ellis was trailing the

play and recovered the ball at the 8, and the Buckeyes had dodged another bullet.

But Skillings wasn't finished.

Wilson moved his team inside the red zone on its next possession and had first-and-goal at the 1-yard line. But after a pair of runs were stopped for no gain, and Wilson threw an incompletion on third down, Skillings stepped in front of a receiver on fourth down and saved another touchdown with an interception.

"You look back at the fumble recovery on the punt and the two plays that Skillings made – causing that fumble and then the interception in the end zone," Bruce said after the game. "Those were the things that saved us."

Wilson made one last gasp with a final scoring drive during the final minute and a half to make it 49-42 with 11 seconds left in the game. But the ensuing onside kick failed and Schlichter took a knee on the final play to preserve the seven-point victory.

Schlichter had one of his most productive days during four years as OSU's starting quarterback, connecting on 17 of 21 attempts for 284 yards and a career-high four touchdowns. Williams and Donley each cracked the century mark in receiving, combining for 13 catches for 257 yards and three scores.

That all paled in comparison to Wilson's record performance. He finished with 43 completions on 69 attempts for 621 yards and six touchdowns. The yardage figure established a new NCAA single-game record that has since been broken several times, but it remains the highest single-game total in Big Ten history with no other quarterback ever eclipsing the 600-yard mark. C.J. Stroud of Ohio State came closest with 573 yards against Utah during the 2022 Rose Bowl.

In terms of Ohio State opponents, Wilson established still-standing records for most passes completed, most passing yards and most touchdown passes, while Illinois registered the most total offense (659 yards) and most first downs (36) for any opponent in OSU program history.

After the game, the usually stone-faced Bruce allowed himself to crack a joke at his own expense.

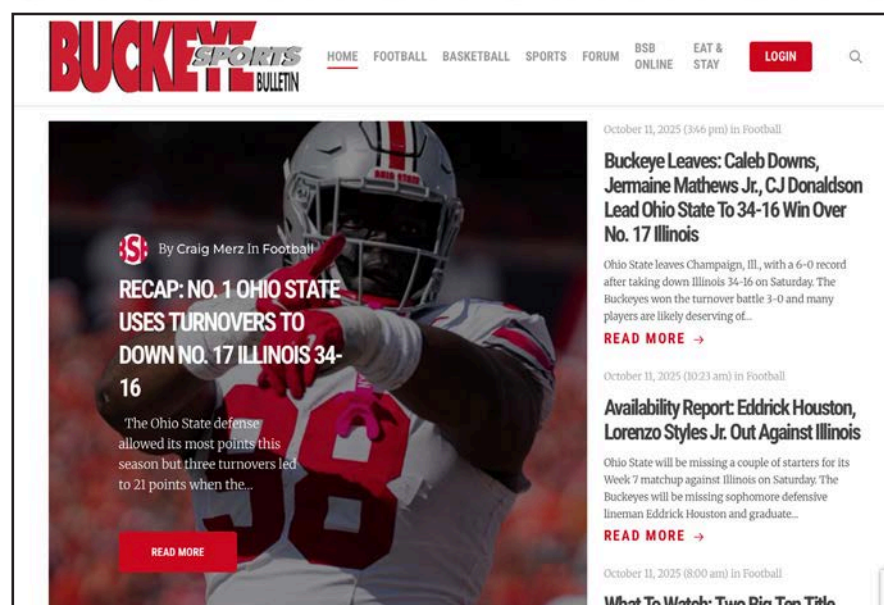
"It's a good thing (Wilson) didn't have a very good start," the OSU head coach said with a wry smile. "Otherwise, he might have thrown for a thousand today."

In a show of sportsmanship and appreciation for what it had just seen, the Ohio Stadium crowd gave Wilson and his teammates a standing ovation as they left the field.

"That was one of the greatest experiences of my sports career," said Wilson, who later played seven NFL seasons with the New Orleans Saints before becoming a pro scout. "It was such a neat feeling to walk off that field and receive that type of ovation."

"As I was coming across to the locker room, there was an older gentleman in the stands who must have been about 75. He said he was a great fan of Ohio State and said he hadn't missed a home game in something like 50 years. He had this Ohio State hat, and he handed it to me. He said, 'Here, I want you to have this because that was one of the greatest performances I have ever seen in this stadium.' That was quite an honor. And you know what? I still have that hat."

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# Klare Coming Into His Own For Ohio State

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

There is a lot that can be said about some of the top talent of the 2024 Purdue football team, but the team itself struggled on the field.

Finishing with 11 losses, eight of them coming by at least 17 points, Purdue's issues make it no surprise that former Boilermaker and current Ohio State tight end Max Klare had some catching up to do when he arrived in Columbus.

"I think the preseason was a challenge for him," said Ohio State coach Ryan Day of Klare on Sept. 8, "but he came out the back end and he's stronger for it. It's not easy for you to come right in here and match the physicality of the day-to-day when maybe you're not used to it. He's becoming a better player, and I think he's going to have a big year for us."

Although he wasn't necessarily expected to become the All-Big Ten tight end he was at Purdue, Klare has emerged as a dynamic receiving threat in the weeks since Day's comments, snagging 15 catches for 175 yards in his last six games.

In fact, Klare was ranked the No. 1,191 player in the country and the No. 69 tight end out of the 2022 class, and despite being right in the Buckeyes' back yard at St. Xavier High School in Cincinnati, he wasn't offered a scholarship by Day's coaching staff. In fairness to the Buckeyes, they weren't the only ones to miss out on Klare. With just two years of experience at tight end, having previously played quarterback in high school, Klare received Power Four offers from only Duke, Georgia Tech and Purdue.

In part because Purdue was in desperate need of playmakers under then-head coach Ryan Walters, it didn't take long for the modestly ranked Klare to get on the field. Despite suffering an ankle injury that limited him to only five games, Klare finished his redshirt-freshman season as the team's fifth-leading receiver with 196 receiving yards on 22 catches.

Klare showed what he could do in a full season's work as a sophomore when he went for team-high totals of 51 catches for 685 receiving yards and four touchdowns.

Still, ranking toward the bottom of many different statistical categories and undoubtedly being one of the worst teams in the Power Four, Purdue not surprisingly fired Walters. As is the case at many schools that have a head-coaching change, an exodus occurred from Purdue's roster. Klare was one of 56 Boilermakers to enter the transfer portal, but he may have been the most coveted.

As one of the more talented players at the tight end position in the portal, it came as a slight surprise to some that Klare opted to go to Ohio State, a program not necessarily known for its tight ends. According to Klare, Ohio State tight ends coach Keenan Bailey said the right things to lure him to Columbus.

"I think Coach Keenan hit on all the things I wanted to hear and some things I didn't want to hear," Klare said. "You want to be in an environment that's going to push you in all aspects of the game, and being a tight end, it's just not about pass catching.



SONNY BROCKWAY

**FRESH START — Tight end Max Klare was challenged in all aspects of his game, which included working out with star wide receiver Jeremiah Smith, to improve himself after transferring from Purdue. He has 15 catches for 175 yards and a touchdown.**

You have to block, and I think that's something that I want to keep developing."

For better or worse, Klare got what he wished for. Ohio State's strength and conditioning coach, Mick Marotti, paired him up in the offseason with two-time Iron Buckeye recipient and standout receiver Jeremiah Smith.

"When he first got here, just working out with him in the offseason, he really didn't have it in him," Smith said of Klare, "but Coach Mick put me with him so I had to take care of him,

"I don't want to say he wasn't a dog, but Coach Mick put me with him, so he trusts me to get him right and make him a dog. So that's what happened."

Klare noticed some differences between how things were done with the Boilermakers and Buckeyes all the way back in the spring.

"It's still football, but there are differences just within the day-to-day routines," Klare said during spring practices. "The way they coach certain things, it's different."

Smith said Klare echoed that sentiment to him after a particularly hard workout in the offseason and added that the other

tight ends also helped him raise his level of toughness in the weight room.

"You just have to challenge people," Smith said. "The tight ends do a great job of that as well. You have Bennett Christian, (Max LeBlanc) as well. Those guys do a great job at pushing each other every day."

Klare's adjustment period bled into the start of the season for Ohio State. In the Buckeyes' season-opening 14-7 win over Texas, Klare got off to a difficult start. On a fourth-and-1 play on the Buckeyes' opening drive of the game, Klare dropped a 14-yard pass on the sidelines despite the ball hitting him right in the hands.

He didn't do much to redeem himself in the rest of the game. Instead, Klare finished with one catch for 11 yards, and then the next week, he wasn't much of a factor in the Buckeyes' 70-0 win over Grambling State.

In the game against the Tigers, Klare had only one catch for 7 yards while fellow tight ends Will Kacmarek and Jelani Thurman each had multiple catches and both found the end zone.

Still, Day felt like Klare was making improvements behind the scenes.

"I think he's playing faster and faster.

If you watch the film the other day, he was moving around well," Day said the week after the win over the Tigers. "He didn't get as many touches, but the tight ends did. We'll keep building packages for him, but I think he's gotten faster and faster as he's come out of camp. I'm excited to see where the next couple of games go."

Klare finally started to look the part in Ohio State's next game against Ohio when he got into the end zone for the first time on a 16-yard pass from redshirt freshman quarterback Julian Sayin.

"It felt great," Klare said of his touchdown. "I kind of blacked out. That's probably one of the coolest touchdowns I have ever scored, just looking up into the (Block O student section). It was pretty sweet."

Klare finished that game with two catches for 30 yards before having another two-catch game against Washington one game later.

He had his best game of the season, though, against Minnesota on Oct. 4. Klare had a season-high total of 63 receiving yards on five catches, which included one that went for 29 yards.

On the play, Klare adjusted well to a ball from Sayin and held onto the ball despite being hit by Minnesota safety Koi Perich.

"I thought Max (Klare) played better," Day said of his performance. "He made some better blocks and made some plays downfield. So he's really coming into his own."

Klare is certainly known more for his receiving prowess than anything else, but he has still worked hard this year to improve his run-blocking as well.

"I think just hand placement, running off the ball, velocity into it, stuff like that," Klare said when asked how he's improved as a run-blocker.

Klare's growth as a blocker was reflected in the Buckeyes' win over Washington, when on a 10-yard run by CJ Donaldson Jr., he executed a kick-out block on Washington linebacker Jacob Manu to open up a hole.

Klare's run-blocking improvements were rewarded against the Golden Gophers, and for the first time this season, he was given the most snaps out of anyone in the tight end room.

Although the first couple of games were rocky, Klare has impressed his coach with the progress he's made.

"Max is getting better and better," Day said. "I think there was a little bit of an adjustment based on how we practiced in the preseason, and I think you're really seeing him start to take off now. We see that happening a lot when we have newcomers coming to the program, but his attitude has been great, and you're seeing the talent come forward now, and he's building some chemistry with Julian. It's good to see him making plays, because he certainly has the ability."

It isn't just Day who likes what he has seen from Klare, but also Smith. The standout receiver said he would now describe Klare as a "dog," even if he might not have been when he first came in from Purdue.

"Max is definitely taking that step on and off the field," Smith said. "I'm very proud of him and the things he's doing on the offense this year."



# Unorthodox Road Leads Malone To Start For OSU

By **SAM CIPRIANI**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Tywone Malone Jr. has taken an unconventional route to becoming a key contributor to the Ohio State football team, beginning his career as a two-sport athlete at the University of Mississippi before transferring to the Buckeyes, where he has worked his way up from a depth role to a starting position.

As the senior defensive tackle reflected on his road to becoming a starter at Ohio State, he believes every step has led him where he is supposed to be.

"I feel like I'm here for a reason," said Malone after his second career start against Washington on Sept. 27. "I feel like my journey was my journey for a reason, and I'm right where God believes I should be."

Coming out of Bergen Catholic High School in Oradell, N.J., Malone was a four-star prospect who was the No. 63 overall recruit in the class of 2021 and the top player in his home state.

Even though Malone was offered and recruited by some of the nation's best programs –including Alabama, Florida State, Notre Dame and Ohio State – the defensive tackle committed elsewhere to fulfill a lifelong dream of playing two sports.

Malone chose Ole Miss and began his career for the Rebels in 2021, where he spent two seasons as a member of both their football and baseball teams.

Though Malone's football career was more promising, he was still the No. 500-ranked baseball recruit in the nation and the 25th-ranked first baseman nationally, according to Perfect Game.

Over two seasons with the Rebels baseball team, Malone played in 13 games, with five hits and three home runs, while bringing in five RBI. He ended his time at Ole Miss with a solid .263 batting average and a whopping .737 slugging percentage. As an added bonus, Ole Miss claimed the 2022 College World Series title, the first of two championships Malone would win in college.

In his freshman season at Ole Miss on the gridiron, Malone saw the field in only one game, but as a sophomore, he began to receive the opportunity to flash his potential. Malone made 13 appearances for the Rebels in 2022 – typically on special teams, but occasionally as the backup defensive tackle – and recorded 10 tackles and one tackle for loss while breaking up two passes.

Following the 2022 season, Malone knew he was due for a change and entered the transfer portal.

With Malone in the transfer portal, Ohio State, which had originally made a big push for the defensive tackle when he was coming out of high school, surfaced again as one of his top landing spots.

Defensive line coach Larry Johnson said that since he recruited Malone out of high school, when the former two-sport athlete entered the transfer portal, he knew Malone would be a strong fit for Ohio State's culture.

"I liked him in high school," Johnson said in 2023, the offseason when Malone joined the program. "I saw him in high school



FILE PHOTO

**POSTING GOOD RESULTS — Senior defensive tackle Tywone Malone Jr. is unique in having been a part of NCAA championship teams in two sports — baseball at Mississippi in 2022 and with Ohio State football in 2024. He earned his first of four straight starts for the Buckeyes on Sept. 13 vs. Ohio.**

and recruited him out of high school. We thought we had a shot at him, but he wanted to play baseball and do both. We felt like it was someone we knew (when he entered the portal). That was the first thing. We weren't strangers to him. We knew he could fit our culture. That was a key, because you want to make sure you put the right guys in the room. And we felt like he met all those criteria."

Malone said that though he enjoyed his time at Ole Miss, he knew he wanted to take a step forward and specifically focus on his football career, choosing the Buckeyes as a result.

"I was happy at Ole Miss," Malone told Eleven Warriors in 2023. "That was my home. Those are my brothers, will always be my brothers. But I just had to start up a new chapter."

Upon Malone's arrival that summer, Johnson expressed excitement for the defensive tackle to focus on just one sport.

"You don't know (where he's at) because he played baseball. So he never had his foot fully in football," Johnson said. "This is the first time that he's just going to play football and concentrate on football. And so I think we'll see a different athlete. He didn't do spring ball his first year there. He played

baseball. So that had a lot to do with his development and where he's at right now. Certainly, he's got a great upside to where he's going to go."

Malone's first two seasons as a Buckeye were a mirror image of his time at Ole Miss. Sitting behind a stacked defensive line full of veterans, including defensive tackles Tyleik Williams, Mike Hall and Ty Hamilton, Malone played in just seven games for Ohio State in 2023, racking up five tackles.

In 2024, Malone saw an increased role as a backup, playing in 11 of the Buckeyes' 16 contests on the way to winning the College Football Playoff national championship.

Malone said he put an emphasis on developing his first two seasons at Ohio State, adding that he studied Johnson as well as the former linemen Williams and Hamilton to better himself on and off the field.

"I learned more about the game throughout watching other people play and especially with the coaches, with Coach Johnson, Tyleik and Ty when they were here," Malone said. "Seeing how they handle certain situations or how they handle watching film or watching their opponents to try to figure out certain tips and keys that they can use in the game."

However, in 2025, Malone has made a major surge, beginning fall camp with a chance to earn time at the three-technique behind Eddrick Houston.

Malone served as the backup behind Houston for Ohio State's first two contests in 2025 but earned a surprise start on Sept. 13 against Ohio, the first of his football career, though he still split time with Houston.

In his second start against Washington, Malone brought down Huskies for three tackles while playing a career-high 31 snaps.

OSU coach Ryan Day said Malone's performance was a sign of his growth and a step toward becoming a consistent contributor on the defensive line.

"I thought Tywone took a step in the game," Day said. "I thought he played well. He still has some things that I know Coach Johnson is working on to get him to play better, but he did some nice things in the game. He graded out (as champion), so that's big as we need that position to continue to build depth and play at a high level."

Malone said that despite receiving a career-high snap count against the Huskies, he felt like nothing had changed, as he was ready for the adjustment of becoming a starter.

"I felt the same," Malone said. "We've been going hard since fall camp. We've been rotating guys, and it's 'next man up' (mentality). So whoever's out there just has to play as hard as they can, as long as they can, until the next man steps in to take over for you."

Day said that increased confidence and improved preparation have led to stronger performances.

"It's a mindset, and his mindset's changed, and because of that, you're seeing better play," Day said.

Malone's leap to becoming a starter didn't happen overnight, though.

The combination of watching veterans, feeding off the energy of his defensive line group, and gaining confidence in himself and the unit has fueled Malone's growth this season, he said.

"Pretty much just understanding the game better," he said of reasons for his improved play. "Watching everybody perform, play and seeing what they did, how they prepare for games, and just knowing that I have to do what I have to do to help my teammates win. Especially at the three-tech position with me and Eddrick and Jason (Moore). We all rotate in. We all build confidence in each other, and it doesn't matter who goes out there first. We're all going to have the same standards and ball out."

Malone's growth and journey as a player mirror the mentality required in the trenches – persistence, toughness and a willingness to battle snap after snap.

As a defensive tackle, Malone said that the same everyday fight defines his role every time he lines up for the Buckeyes.

"It's a fight every day up front," he said. "It's the trenches. You're going to have to fight every time or you're going to get defeated. It's just a constant battle between you and the other guy. You've just got to keep attacking."



# Badgers Spiraling As OSU Heads To Madison

By **GREG WILSON**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Former Ohio State defensive coordinator Luke Fickell is in his third season at the helm at Wisconsin, and in each year, so far, things have only gotten worse for him and the program.

His first season with the program in 2023 ended with a 7-6 record and a high point of being ranked No. 19 in the AP top 25, which was where the Badgers were in the preseason rankings. That year was the last time the Buckeyes matched up against Wisconsin, with wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. leading them to a 24-10 win at Camp Randall Stadium.

But a year later, Wisconsin finished with a 5-7 record and missed out on a bowl game for the first time since the 2001 season. This year looks to be the second straight season that will happen. The Badgers are off to a 2-4 start, which most recently includes a 37-0 loss to Iowa at home.

“Well, that’s as low as it can be,” Fickell said after the game. “I apologize. I apologized to our guys. To not be ready, to not have them ready, I’m dumbfounded in a lot of ways. But that’s my job.”

With midseason coaching changes happening in the Big Ten – James Franklin fired by Penn State on Oct. 12 and Deshaun Foster fired by UCLA on Sept. 14 – it’s hard not to feel that Fickell could be next at any point. As BSB went to press, the Badgers had not yet parted ways with the three-year head coach.

The poor start can partly be chalked up to the tough schedule that Wisconsin drew

this season. It played in Alabama to finish a home-and-home series with the Crimson Tide, losing 38-14, went to Ann Arbor for a 24-10 loss to Michigan and hosted the Hawkeyes on Oct. 11.

But the Badgers aren’t getting any breaks this season, either. The schedule actually looks tougher moving forward. After hosting Ohio State at Camp Randall, they go to Autzen Stadium to play Oregon, host the high-powered Washington offense, then go to Indiana before finally hosting Illinois. Their last week at Minnesota will surely feel like somewhat of a breath of fresh air after getting out of that tough stretch.

The season also hasn’t been made any easier with starting quarterback Billy Edwards Jr. dealing with a lingering injury. After being shut out against Iowa, Fickell still didn’t have a meaningful update on Edwards.

“We’ll figure it out,” Fickell said. “But I’m sure, to him, in some ways, he wants to see some positives too. And I know that he can make a difference. That’s one of those things that we’ve just got to find a way. That’s maybe one of those sparks that can help.

“But I don’t have a good indication on when exactly (Edwards) is going to be available,” Fickell admitted. “Is he going to be available at 85 percent? Is he going to be available at 90 percent? I can surely tell you that (Iowa’s) quarterback wasn’t at 100 percent. I’m not saying what the injuries are. We’re just going to have to figure that out. But I don’t know.”

With Edwards out, Danny O’Neil and Hunter Simmons have shared the load at quarterback. O’Neil has completed 60 of 85 passes (70.6 percent) for 640 yards with five touchdowns and five interceptions, while Simmons is 33 of 59 passing for 329 yards, one touchdown and three picks.

Turnovers have been a major problem for the Badgers this season, especially early in the loss to the Hawkeyes. Fickell believes that the game could have looked much different if they had been more careful with the ball.

“Not that you can go back and change it, but I hope and believe that had that not started the way it did (with) the turnovers, at least it would have been a hell of a lot different game,” Fickell said. “I’m not saying they’re not a better team than we are. I just think that it’s not fair that we were not able to put ourselves in a position where we could make it a damn football game.”

Protecting the quarterback are left tackle Riley Mahlman, left guard Joe Brunner, center Davis Heinzen, right guard Kerry Kodanko and right tackle Emerson Mandell. The Badgers are 98th in the country, allowing 2.3 sacks per game (14 total).

The pass not being much of a threat certainly hasn’t helped the run game get going with Dilin Jones totaling 286 rushing yards and two scores on 68 carries this season and Darrion Dupree following with 169 yards on 44 attempts and no touchdowns.

The Badgers are averaging a total of 292.5 yards per game as an offense, which is 127th in the country. When it comes to fixing that, Fickell thinks it has to start with the run game, he said after the loss to Iowa.

“This is not going to be an easy fix,” Fick-

## Get To Know ... Wisconsin

- **2025 Record:** 2-4, 0-3 Big Ten.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Air raid; Defensive Formation – 2-4-5; Starters returning – Offense 3, Defense 5, Specialists 2.
- **Head Coach:** Luke Fickell, 3rd year at Wisconsin, 15-17.
- **Series History:** 87th meeting; Ohio State leads 63-18-5.
- **School Facts:** Location – Madison, Wis.; Enrollment – 49,844; Nickname – Badgers; Colors – Cardinal and White; Conference – Big Ten; Stadium – Camp Randall Stadium (Surface – FieldTurf; Capacity – 80,321).

### Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Dilin Jones	68	286	4.2	2
Darrion Dupree	44	169	3.8	0
Cade Yacamelli	24	82	3.4	1

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Danny O’Neil	60-85	70.6	640	5-5
Hunter Simmons	33-59	55.9	329	1-3
Billy Edwards Jr.	7-16	43.8	113	0-0

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Vinny Anthony	24	274	11.4	1
Lance Mason	18	236	13.1	2
Trech Kekahuna	12	143	11.9	0
Jayden Ballard	7	150	21.4	2

### Team Offensive Stats

**Points Per Game – 15.5**  
**Rushing Yards Per Game – 112.2**  
**Passing Yards Per Game – 180.3**  
**Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 292.5**

### 2025 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Aug. 28	MIAMI (OHIO)	W, 17-0
Sept. 6	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	W, 42-10
Sept. 13	at Alabama	L, 38-14
Sept. 20	MARYLAND	L, 27-10
Oct. 4	at Michigan	L, 24-10
Oct. 11	IOWA	L, 37-0
Oct. 18	OHIO STATE	3:30 p.m.
Oct. 25	at Oregon	TBA
Nov. 8	WASHINGTON	TBA
Nov. 15	at Indiana	TBA
Nov. 22	ILLINOIS	TBA
Nov. 29	at Minnesota	TBA

### Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Christian Alliegro	26	15	41	4-22	2-20
Tackett Curtis	15	13	28	1-7	1-7
Austin Brown	15	8	23	1-5	0-0
Matt Jung	14	6	20	0-0	0-0
Mason Reiger	12	7	19	3-22	2-19
Ricardo Hallman	15	2	17	0-0	0-0

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD
Preston Zachman	2	17	8.5	0
Ricardo Hallman	1	0	0	0
Omillio Agard	1	0	0	0

### Team Defensive Stats

**Points Per Game Allowed – 22.7**  
**Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 97.5**  
**Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 219.5**  
**Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 317.0**



FILE PHOTO

**NO CHEESE WIZ – When Luke Fickell was hired from Cincinnati before the 2023 season, he was viewed as a savior for the Wisconsin program, but his record of 15-17 in three-plus seasons is not gouda ’nuff, and his seat is hotter than a fondue heading into the former Ohio State player and coach’s matchup against the Buckeyes.**

ell said. “Pound the rock is the idea. Something has to break at some point and time. I’m not going to say tonight was an opportunity for that, but every night, every Saturday is an opportunity for that, and it did not happen tonight.”

Whoever is under center will be throwing to wide receivers Vinny Anthony, former Buckeye Jayden Ballard and Trech Kekahuna. Anthony leads the three with 274 yards on 24 receptions for one score, while Ballard has managed 150 yards on seven catches for two touchdowns.

Tight end Lance Mason is also a relative threat in the receiving game, going for 236 yards on 18 catches for two touchdowns through six games.

The defensive side of the ball has been a little better for the Badgers, giving up 22.7 points per game, which is 58th in the country. They are also 34th in the country in total defense, giving up 317.0 yards per game.

That success is largely due to the team’s rushing defense, which is 19th in the country and is giving up just 97.5 yards per game.

The defensive line consists of Ben Barten and Jayviar Suggs, who have combined for just seven total tackles up the middle. But the Badgers get a lot of linebackers on the field, often working out of either a 3-4 or 2-4-5 formation as a unit.

Darryl Peterson and Sebastian Cheeks work as outside linebackers for the Badgers, with others rotating in, and Christian Alliegro and Tackett Curtis on the interior.

The defensive unit has done fairly well getting into the backfield against opponents, with 26 tackles for loss for 125 total yards in six games. Eleven of those have been sacks, with quarterbacks losing 91 yards on those plays.

Alliegro leads the team in tackles with

41, four of them for loss and two for sacks. Peterson has 13 stops and has moved between the middle of the field and the defensive line this season. His stats aren’t piling up as much as they did last season, but he believes he has improved as a player.

“I’ve gotten better as a player, but I don’t think the numbers have always been there so far,” Peterson said before the Iowa game. “This year, I’m not worried about the numbers. I just want to be disruptive and make as big of an impact as possible.”

In the secondary are cornerbacks D’Yoni Hill and Ricardo Hallman with free safety Matt Jung, strong safety Austin Brown and nickel back Geimere Latimer II. The defense as a whole has managed to pick off four passes this season, but it is the 66th-best team in the nation at stopping the pass, allowing 219.5 yards per game through the air.

Fickell is certainly trying to beat Ohio State when the No. 1 Buckeyes come to town on Oct. 18, but even a somewhat competitive showing could be enough to keep him around for a little longer. He knows that there is a lot to do before the Wisconsin football program gets to the point where he wanted to take it when he first got the job.

“There is nothing I can say out here publicly that is any different. What matters is what is said in that (locker) room,” Fickell said. “I don’t fault you for asking. I don’t think people should think anything different, but the truth of the matter is this is not an easy fix and we’ve got a hell of a long way to go.

“But you get some ass whuppings, and at some point in time, you figure out whether you’re tired of it, sick of it, or you’re not. And that’s where we are as a program, as a team.”





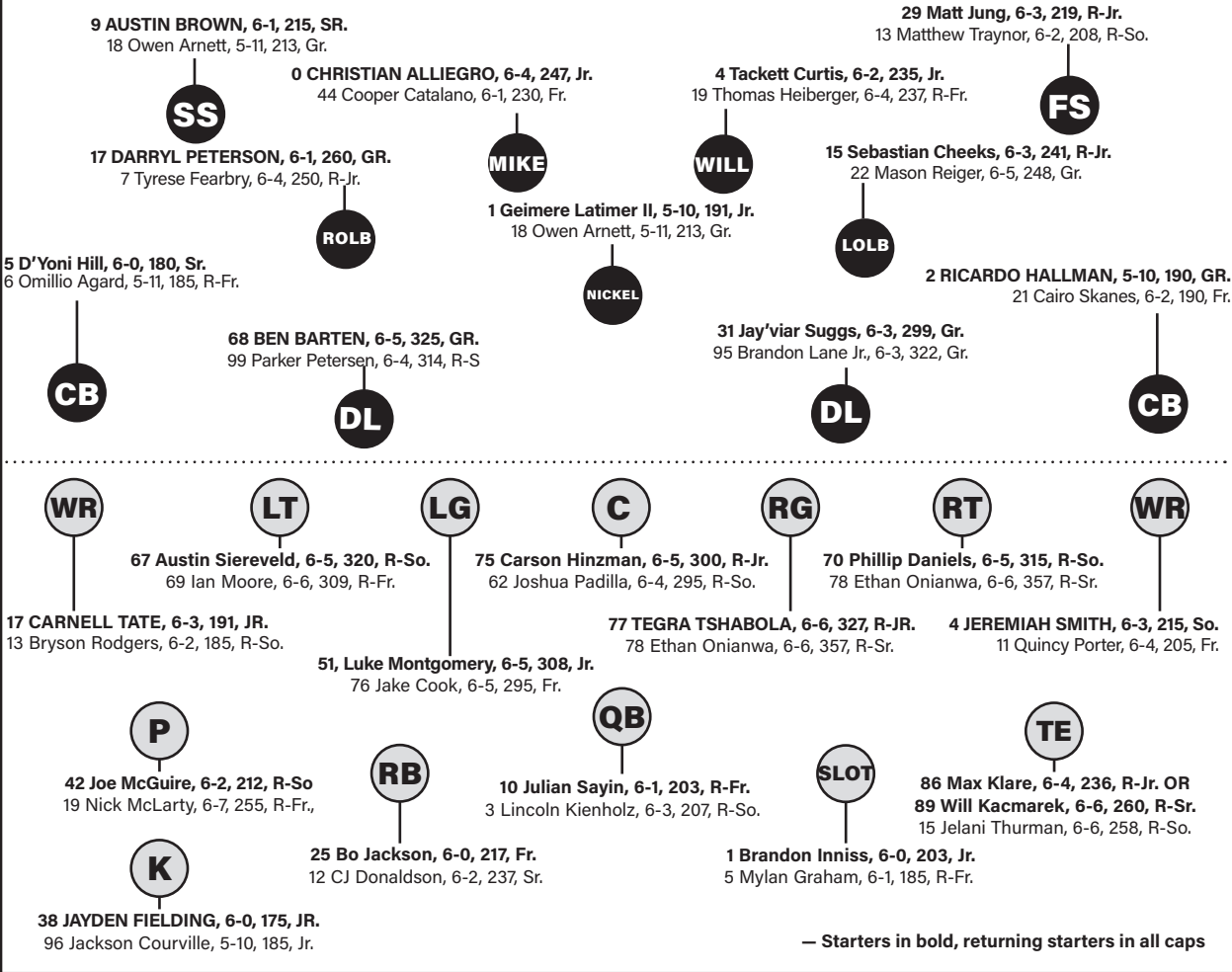
# Ohio State at Wisconsin

Oct. 18 • 3:30 p.m. • CBS  
Camp Randall Stadium; Madison, Wis.

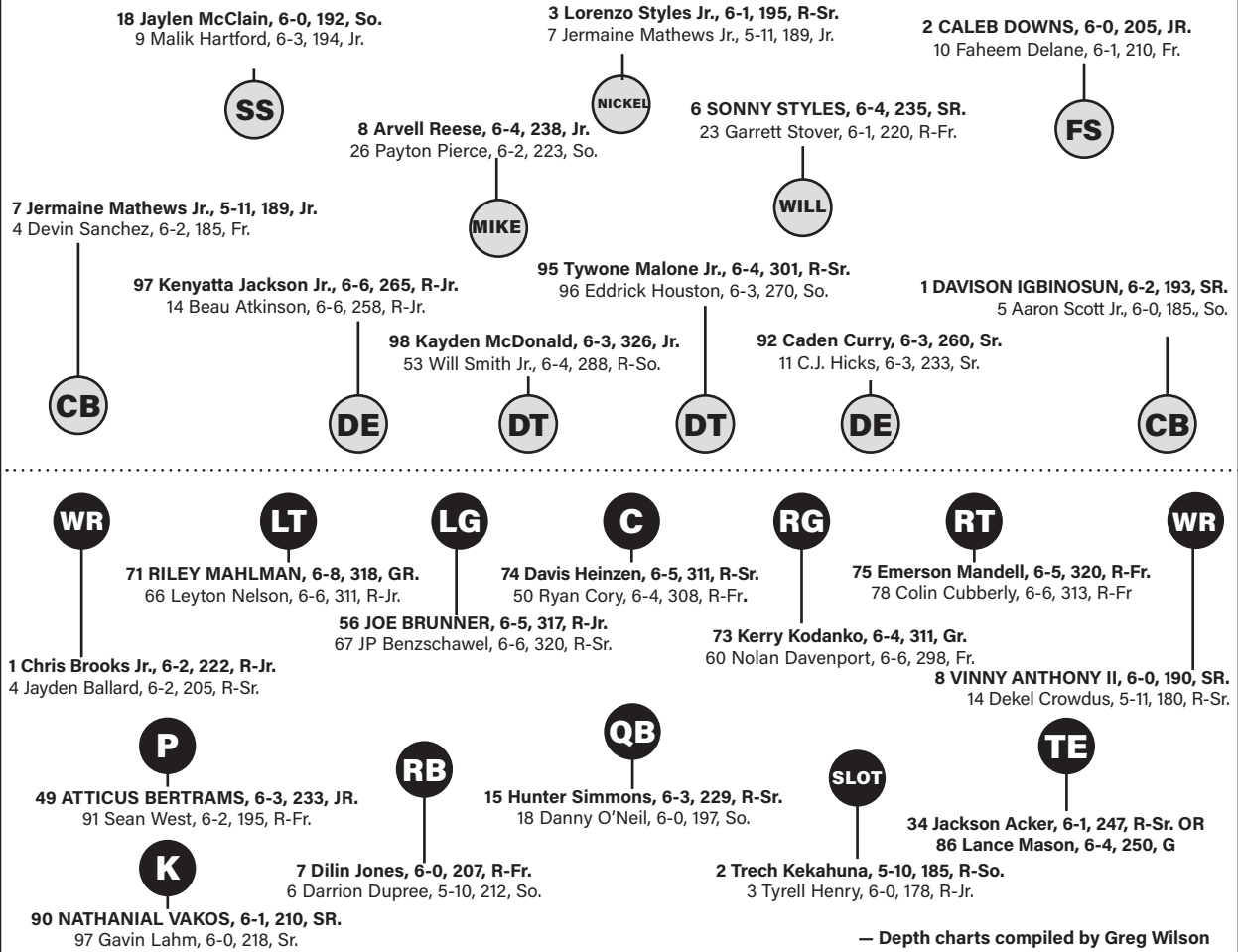


## Projected Depth Charts

### WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



### WHEN WISCONSIN HAS THE BALL...



### How We See It

#### OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. WISCONSIN RUSH DEFENSE

The Badgers should be ornery after being embarrassed 37-0 by Iowa at home. With four straight losses and coach Luke Fickell under fire, will it matter? Fun fact: During the losing streak, the Badgers have been outscored 74-7 in the first half. At first glance, the Buckeyes posted unimpressive numbers in the 34-16 win at Illinois – 272 total yards and 106 rushing yards on a 2.9 per carry average – but statistics can be deceiving because five OSU drives began inside the Illinois 45. Add the fact that the Buckeyes were in a lot of goal-line situations where yards are at a premium, and the rushing figures are naturally going to be skewed downward. Still, constantly needing three or even four cracks to score from the 5 or closer is not optimal. Bo Jackson ran for 47 yards on 10 attempts with a long of 17, and CJ Donaldson Jr. netted 44 yards through 13 totes. Wisconsin was sixth nationally, allowing 75.0 rushing yards per game, and was one of 13 teams to allow two or fewer runs of 20-plus yards. Then Iowa visited. The Hawkeyes ran for 210 yards (5.8 avg.) and four touchdowns. Xavier Williams had two of them for 29 and 19 yards, and Nathan McNeil added a 24-yard run. Kamari Moulton gained 96 yards on 15 carries. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

#### WISCONSIN RUSH OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Badgers aren't the Badgers of old when they would line up and batter the opposition into submission with big backs and punishing drives. They rank 115th out of 134 teams with an average of 112.2 yards per game while gaining 3.1 yards per carry with five TDs. On the positive side, they popped for 127 yards against an Iowa defense that was allowing 69.4, although UW averaged only 3.5 yards per rush. The Buckeyes are No. 9 nationally against the run (84.0) after limiting Illinois to 47 yards (1.7 avg.) although they gave up a 23-yarder as well as their first rushing touchdown of the season. Still, it's nothing to worry about. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

#### OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. WISCONSIN PASS DEFENSE

After Julian Sayin threw for more than 300 yards in the previous game vs. Minnesota, he was off target more than usual (19 of 27) while throwing for 166 yards and two touchdowns. Again, the short field was a factor. Jeremiah Smith had five catches for 42 yards and a TD while Carnell Tate (41 yards) and tight end Max Klare (38 yards) each had four receptions. It was a matter of taking what was given. Wisconsin is 66th in pass defense (219.5), but Iowa totaled just 109 yards while completing 18 of 25. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

#### WISCONSIN PASS OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

When Iowa records a shutout against you for the first time since 1996, nothing works. With starting quarterback Billy Edwards Jr. out since starting the opener, it's been a disaster. First it was sophomore Danny O'Neil then senior Hunter Simmons. By the way, Fickell has used five starting QBs in the past two seasons. Simmons, in his second start for the Badgers, was 8 of 21 for 82 yards with two interceptions and a fumble. Illinois showed the blueprint for attacking the stout OSU defense by going up-tempo and spreading the field to counter defensive coordinator Matt Patricia's many looks. Luke Altnmyer was 30 of 44 for 248 yards, a TD and an interception. The Buckeyes were flagged several times for pass interference and got away with a couple more. OSU is seventh in pass defense (145.0). **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

#### SPECIAL TEAMS

Brandon Inniss continues to struggle on returns with poor decision making, and punter Joe McGuire averaged a weak 37.8 yards for the Buckeyes, whose units should be renamed "average teams." Former OSU receiver Jayden Ballard had a 6-yard punt return for the Badgers. Wouldn't he like to break one? Punter Atticus Bertrams averaged 37.7 yards vs. Iowa. **EDGE: EVEN**

#### INTANGIBLES

Everything went sideways for the Badgers, including an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty before the game because a player taunted the Iowa team. The Badgers (2-4, 0-3) have lost eight straight conference games, and it only gets worse. After OSU, they play at Oregon. They also have Indiana and Illinois on the schedule. As of this writing, Fickell has not been fired, but it feels like another humiliating home loss this week (the Iowa game was homecoming) could be the tipping point, although he reportedly has a \$27.5 million buyout after this season. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

#### STAFF PREDICTION

It's hard to imagine no matter how desperate the Badgers are that they can hang with the Buckeyes. Camp Randall used to be intimidating, especially at night, but a late afternoon game with a frustrated and angry fan base should play in the Buckeyes' favor. They need to clean up a few things and take care of business going into the final open weekend. **OHIO STATE 45, WISCONSIN 7**



# Garrett Wilson Catching On As Jets Captain

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Garrett Wilson has no regrets about signing an extension with the New York Jets in July.

On the surface, it seems a ridiculous statement considering the former Ohio State wide receiver agreed to a four-year, \$130 million contract that includes \$90 million guaranteed to make him one of the high-est-paid receivers in the NFL.

But Wilson was used to playing for winners at Ohio State. In his three seasons from 2019-21, the Buckeyes were 31-4, made the College Football Playoff twice and reached the championship game in 2020.

He made 143 career catches for 2,213 yards and 23 touchdowns. In 2021, he teamed with Chris Olave to become the second set of receivers ever nationally to be named first-team All-Americans in the same season.

Wilson knows the upside of football. He's now part of the downside with the Jets, who drafted him 10th overall in 2022.

Since then, the Jets are 19-38 without a sniff of the playoffs, twice posting 7-10 records and notching a 5-12 mark last season.

They are 0-6 this season after losing 13-11 to the Denver Broncos in London on Oct. 12 under first-year coach Aaron Glenn.

Wilson, who was voted a captain this season, still believes the franchise can become respectable.

"I love it here," Wilson said. "These people have bought into me since I was a college kid, and not knowing what my next step was as far as football and the fan base has dove into me. This is where I want to be. This is where I want to win at. It's not about just winning. For me, it's about where do you do it at? What role did you play in that?"

"And I truly believe, because of the things that guys have gone through these last few years and what we're battling to get out of, it will make it that much more beautiful down the stretch. And I don't ever lose sight of that, or ever lose faith in AG (Glenn), (GM Darren Mougey), our staff and everyone here. We know what their plan is."

His words and actions on the field have earned him respect and praise from the hardened New York media: "Garrett Wilson is the star – and the leader – the Jets need now" was the headline for the New York Times article on Oct. 10 by Zack Rosenblatt.

"I'm glad he's a Jet, and he's going to be here for a long time," Glenn said. "Because I know for a fact when this thing pops, I want him to experience winning. He deserves it."

## Jet Lag

However, Wilson isn't sugarcoating the situation. The Jets signed Justin Fields, Wilson's quarterback in 2019 and '20, but it hasn't worked out so far.

"No one expected this," Wilson said after the Jets' 37-22 loss to the Dallas Cowboys on Oct. 5. "This is my first time going through a full staff change, and I can't say I knew what I was getting into as far as the growing pains that come with that."

"I'm not going to sit here and say this is what new coaches go through, new whatever, new staffs, but I still have that faith that



FILE PHOTO

**TAKING FLIGHT — Former Ohio State receiver Garrett Wilson is already in the New York Jets' top-10 career receptions list in just his fourth season, but none of the catches have been in a playoff game and the Jets probably won't qualify again this season with an 0-6 record through Oct. 12. He's trying to maintain a positive outlook in his first season as a captain.**

we're going to be better off for it. I feel like we are building something in that locker room leading up to Sundays every week. We're not coming out winning the games on Sundays, which isn't OK. But the foundation is there, and we're going to keep building upon this thing.

"It's just about executing when you need it most, that's what this thing comes down to. This is about us as players being at our best when our best is required. And that's got to be the mindset. You don't know what play it is that's going to turn that game around, so you've got to make all of them."

"We're going to play with this thing through all 17 (games) with the utmost faith and faith in your teammate, faith in your coaches, and see where that puts us."

Wilson is doing his best to lift the Jets out of mediocrity. Through the fifth game (Dallas), he accounted for 37.8 percent of the Jets' receiving yards with 33 receptions for 382 yards and four touchdowns.

He added to his totals with three catches for 13 yards against the Broncos. He suffered a knee injury in the loss to the Broncos and will undergo an MRI, but he did manage to finish the game.

"He's a generational player," Fields said. "I've been with him a long time, so nothing that he does surprises me whatsoever."

Wilson is already 10th in Jets history in receptions (315 in 57 games) and, at his current pace, could finish the season in seventh and by the end of next season could be on pace for the top five. He is the first player in franchise history to record 1,000-plus receiving yards in each of his first three seasons.

Records are not on his mind.

"It's cool. I feel like some years down the road, when I'm done playing, I'll tell my kids about stuff like that, maybe use it to brag and

get them to believe what I'm saying when that time comes," he said. "But truly, I don't even think about it."

Glenn and his staff have been utilizing Wilson as much as possible, lining him up in different spots to get him open and he's become more comfortable in the slot.

"This is probably my second or third year being asked to negotiate defenses from the slot more, being a true choice runner and things like that," Wilson said. "Just those looks clearing up for me as I'm seeing them more. I would say I'm a little more trusting myself, less hesitant on routes like that when I have an option."

Said Glenn, "He's very electric when he gets the ball in his hands. We want to make sure, as an offense, that we start to script our plays to make sure certain guys get the ball."

For all the individual accolades, Wilson knows the Jets are not in contention for the postseason again and it bothers him.

"No one guaranteed us anything coming into this season. We've got to put our heads down and keep working," he said. "We've got a new staff. We're being coached right. We're being taught right. The scheme's good."

"This is a simple game. There's a winner and a loser. I wouldn't even say there's anything to balance in that case. I'm doing my job. If it's not enough, then it's not enough. There's nothing to balance. You just get over the hump. Let's find a way to win."

## Follow The Leader

Some outside the organization might be surprised by Wilson's captaincy because he has been known for his histrionics on the sideline when things don't go well. He and Glenn had a prolonged discussion during the 27-21 loss to the Miami Dolphins on Sept. 29.

Passing game coordinator Scott Turner knows Wilson gets frustrated but appreciates that he will let the coaches know why.

"But it's not in a demeaning or nagging way," Turner said. "It's more uplifting, and that's good."

Wilson said in his role as captain, he is working on staying positive.

"I think I'm handling it as well as you can. It's obviously a tough thing to put so much into something and then not have a win to show for it at this point," he said prior to the Denver game. "When you break it down, it's a tough thought, when you think about the time and the hours and just the relationships that you have, that we're not able to win together up to this point."

"The reality of it is, we've still got a lot in front of us and a lot to prove. This coaching staff didn't know me when they came in. Even to this day, I've got a lot to prove. Every week, it's an opportunity. I think thoughts like that are just keeping me good. I'm thankful for the opportunity to just go out and compete every week. As long as that season's still got some time at the end, I'm all right. Those hard times, it's not for nothing. I truly believe that. Thoughts like that are keeping me good. I'm focused on this goal at hand, and we're going to keep chopping."

He knows his teammates are watching what he does in his leadership role.

"He's unbelievable, man," defensive tackle Quinnen Williams said. "You've got a guy that's super talented, super humble, who works his butt off every single day. A lot of guys see the things he's doing and being the guy he is. As a guy who does the right thing every single day, his voice should be heard because if more guys can be like him, this team can go in the right direction."

Wilson doesn't take being a captain lightly.

"I've had some accolades since I got in the league, but this is the one that I'll probably tell my kids about first," Wilson said. "That just comes from the last three years here. I'm not the most outspoken guy. I'm maybe not the blueprint of a leader when it comes to a captain. But to know the guys still appreciate the way I go about things and they respond to what I do and say, it means the world."

"Those people respect the way I go about my business," he added. "They voted me to be captain to be myself. You're still going to see that emotional side of me. But I wouldn't say when I became captain it was 'G, you got to act a certain way.' No, I took it as more special that my teammates deemed me worthy."

The other captains are Fields, Williams, right guard Alijah Vera-Tucker, linebacker Jamien Sherwood, and special-teamer Marcelino McCrary-Ball.

"I just want to be known as resilient, someone that was out there for his teammates every week, someone that took a lot of pride in being part of the change," Wilson said. "That's all I really want. Someone that, when players around the league talk about me, respect the way I played the game and the fact that they know what it took to get to the point that we're eventually going to be at in this facility. I would say that's what I want my legacy to be."



# RECRUITING OUTLOOK

Greg Wilson

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
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
Kharv 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.
Angelo Smith	S	5-10	170	★★★	Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna

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

ion," Williams told Lettermen Row in September. "I've always heard Ohio State is wide receiver U or one of those schools. But no one really thought it could be tight end U. Then once (Brian) Hartline went to OC, they really switched things around from a tight end's perspective. And the stats they've put up so far with tight ends,

With the edge rusher position coming in a little light in the 2026 class – just Gardena (Calif.) Junipero Serra four-star Khary Wilder (6-4, 260) is committed at the position – the 2027 class will be an important cycle for defensive line coach Larry Johnson and the Buckeyes to target edge rushers.



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# '27 QB Edmunds Breaks Touchdown Record

Continued From Page 25

On Oct. 9, the Buckeyes were included in the top 10 for Lewisville, Texas, four-star cornerback Taelyn Mayo (6-4, 185). Mayo included Alabama, Florida State, Georgia, LSU, Miami, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas and Texas A&M in addition to Ohio State. He is considered the No. 140 prospect in the 2027 class, the No. 15 cornerback and the No. 20 player in the state of Texas.

Mayo camped at Ohio State on June 10, receiving an offer from the Buckeyes that same day. It could be hard to pull Mayo out of his home state, but time will tell how hard the Buckeyes want to try to bring him to Ohio.

### Edmunds Breaks Own TD Record

In between trying to help recruit for the Buckeyes' 2027 class, Edmunds is setting records on the high school football field.

In a 65-10 victory over Laguna Hills, Calif., on Oct. 3, the Oilers outgained their opponents 554 yards to 108, with 381 passing yards from Edmunds and seven passing touchdowns, breaking his

own record of six that he set last season.

A highlight video of one of the touchdowns was posted on Twitter by Edmunds. On the snap, the pocket collapses, and Edmunds is able to evade a tackler before rolling out right and stiff-arming a linebacker to the ground before throwing an off-balance bullet to the right edge of the end zone for a score.

Edmunds has dropped in the 247Sports rankings since he committed to Ohio State. He was a five-star and one of the top three quarterbacks in the country when he pledged in December but has fallen to No. 130 in the country, the No. 10 quarterback and the No. 11 player in the state of California.

Despite that fall, Edmunds continues to perform on the field. He has thrown for 1,594 yards and 21 touchdowns this season on 109-of-150 passing with just one interception in six games.

He is coming off a season in which he completed 217 of 348 passes for 3,222 yards and 36 touchdowns to nine interceptions in 12 games.

### 2026 LB Curry Commits To Oklahoma

One of Ohio State's flip targets in the

2026 class, Ponte Vedra Beach (Fla.) Nease four-star linebacker/safety Jacob Curry (6-1, 208), committed to Oklahoma on Oct. 10.

Curry visited Columbus on Oct. 4 and was set to visit Florida State on Oct. 11 but ended up choosing the Sooners over the other two schools he was considering.

He was committed to Northwestern for just over three months, decommitting from the Wildcats in late August just before the season began.

Curry is the No. 411 player in the country, the No. 32 safety and the No. 58 player in the state of Florida, but he was being recruited by OSU linebackers coach James Laurinaitis.

Currently, the Buckeyes have Cleveland Glenville four-star linebacker Cincere Johnson (6-3, 225) and Lewis Center (Ohio) Olentangy three-star linebacker CJ Sanna (6-3, 225) committed in the class, although some recruiting experts believe that Caldwell projects better at the college level as a linebacker than a safety.

### Teams Still Trying To Flip Henry

The Buckeyes got a very early com-

mitment from 2026 prospect Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star wide receiver Chris Henry Jr. (6-5, 205) when he pledged to Ohio State on July 28, 2023.

Since then, he moved out of the state of Ohio to attend Mater Dei, one of the top high school football teams in the country, and teams have not stopped trying to get him to decommit from Ohio State.

The main school that has been on him the entire time is Oregon, and that has not changed. Now, Texas and USC are making a push to try to get Henry to flip as well.

"They are still hitting me up, but I'm at Ohio State," Henry told On3 in August. "It's been great. It's been great since I got the offer. Nothing (has) changed. I still have a great relationship with Coach Hartline and Coach (Ryan) Day. I'm just blessed."

Henry was back at Ohio State for the win over Texas and enjoyed his time back in Columbus.

"That was definitely important, the fact that they won, how big of a game it was," Henry told On3. "It was a good win. I always feel the same about Ohio State as I've been feeling."

Henry also told On3 that other schools

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

### 35 Years Ago — 1990

A résumé for Athens, Ohio, quarterback Bubba Lichtenberg could have well included the phrase, "Have arm, will travel."

Lichtenberg, one of five children of former Ohio State quarterbacks coach and Ohio University head coach Tim Lichtenberg, was starting at quarterback for his fourth varsity high school team in four years.

Bubba's father had relocated each year, with a new job in football coaching each time.

The signal caller had made a career out of rolling on as well as rolling out.

"It's been pretty hard to make friends, but I think I have adjusted pretty well," he said. "A big thing is adjusting to a different offense at the new school each time we move. I'll be happy when I get to college and can settle down with one offense."

Lichtenberg admitted that he had narrowed his choice of schools down, but that his final decision was "still kind of up in the air."

"I guess I'm thinking about Ohio State, Michigan, Notre Dame, Stanford, Colorado State, South Carolina, Michigan State, most of the Big Ten and maybe a few others."

### 30 Years Ago — 1995

It was official: Lancaster, Ohio, offensive lineman Benji Gilbert verbally committed to Ohio State.

He had committed to the Buckeyes back in June, but he backed off the following week, saying he wanted to keep his options open.

But after attending Ohio State's Sept. 30 win over Notre Dame, Gilbert decided to firm up his commitment.

"It wasn't just about that game," he said. "I talked it over with my family. It's a great school with a great football atmosphere, and of course, the location is a factor. It's close to home. It's where I should go."

Gilbert, who was one of seven players committed to OSU, said he was also interested in Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana and Northwestern.

"But I didn't really consider them as much as I considered Ohio State," Gilbert said.

### 25 Years Ago — 2000

Tim Spencer typically spearheaded OSU's recruiting efforts in California, and he was going to be very busy this year. Ohio State was receiving strong interest from as many as 12 of SuperPrep's top 75 prospects in California.

Included in that group was La Quinta linebacker Michael Craven, judged the nation's No. 1 linebacker prospect. He had already scheduled a visit to OSU for Michigan weekend on Nov. 17.

Other notables included Diamond Bar defensive back Dominic Robinson, San Diego Mission Bay running back JaJa Riley, Bakers-

field offensive lineman Robert Bergman, Beverly Hills free safety Jibril Raymo, Carlsbad LaCosta Canyon lineman Joe Toledo, Los Angeles Crenshaw defensive back Terrance Whitehead and Rancho Cucamonga Alta Loma running back DeAndre Belin.

### 20 Years Ago — 2005

The coaching staff of the Ohio State football team had been aware of Grant Schwartz for some time – just not as long as Schwartz had been aware of them.

A safety prospect at Dana Point (Calif.) Dana Hills, Schwartz grew up a Buckeyes fan. That was almost preordained, seeing as how his father, Brian, played under Woody Hayes and Earle Bruce in the late 1970s.

Schwartz had been to Columbus with his father many times – including participating in the Tunnel of Pride prior to the 2002 Michigan game – but it was a trip to the OSU campus over the past summer that helped put Schwartz in his position.

In June, Schwartz attended Ohio State's all-positions camp as a defensive back, and he left the Buckeye coaches impressed. They wanted to see film of his play as a senior.

Once Schwartz had several standout games under his belt – and the coaching staff had a copy of those efforts – it didn't take long for them to make Schwartz an offer to join the program.

### 15 Years Ago — 2010

Ohio State's chances to land the No. 2 overall prospect in Ohio continued to look more and more promising.

After catching a touchdown pass and recording an acrobatic interception during a 17-10 loss on Oct. 8 to Cuyahoga Falls (Ohio) Walsh Jesuit, five-star cornerback Doran Grant told BSB recruiting analyst Bill Greene that he planned to start cutting his list soon.

That should have been good news for Ohio State, which remained one of two schools promised official visits from the Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary star.

"I'm not sure about my five official visits, and I might take most of them after the season," he said. "The only official I'm sure of is going to Ohio State when they play Michigan. I will also take an official to Michigan State, but I'm not sure of the other three."

"Ohio State and Michigan State are my top two, but the official visits will be the most important thing."

### 10 Years Ago — 2015

Four days after the Oct. 14 decommitment of Hubbard, Ohio, four-star running back George Hill, Ohio State secured a commitment from New London (N.C.) North Stanly four-star running back Antonio Williams.

He announced his commitment on Oct. 18, one day after visiting for the Buckeyes' game against Penn State, and also said that he planned to enroll early.

"It feels great ... 79 days from now I'll be in class and getting ready to play," Williams told Scout.com, the parent network of BuckeyeSports.com. "It's a great situation. They have a great psychology program, which is what I want to major in."

"And I've had a great relationship with (running backs coach Tony Alford) since he was at Notre Dame. I already have a very close relationship with him. He's going to tell you how it is, and that's the type of people I like."

### Five Years Ago — 2020

Defensive line coach Larry Johnson was widely considered one of Ohio State's best recruiters, but he admitted during a teleconference on Oct. 7 that he had needed to make significant adjustments to his approach during the pandemic and prolonged dead period.

"The biggest thing is not getting kids on campus," Johnson said. "That's tough with the pandemic, and so you have to really try to take the campus to them and give them the opportunity to see that."

"Really, it's about how the kids see us and how they fit into our system. You try to show that and show exactly how we fit and how you fit in our defensive scheme and what we're looking for."

The Buckeyes staff had conducted numerous virtual visits with prospects to help bridge the gap. But as Johnson said, "There's nothing like getting on campus in person and getting to meet the people you're going to be around. That's probably the toughest thing."

### One Year Ago — 2024

Ohio State 2025 commit Cleveland Villa Angela-St. Joseph four-star running back Bo Jackson (6-0, 205) suffered a knee injury in his team's 53-35 win over Kenston on Sept. 13, one which was revealed on Oct. 8 as serious enough to be season-ending. He wouldn't need surgery on his injured knee, but he also wouldn't suit up again in the coming months.

"We received some very sad and unfortunate news," Jackson's coach, Jeff Rotsky, told The News-Herald. "Bo Jackson is done for the season. By the grace of God, he'll be fine. He doesn't need surgery. The doctor confirmed it from the MRI. All I can say is the injury is serious enough that it ended his season. It's going to take about two more months to heal."

Jackson finished his senior season and high school career with 588 yards and 10 touchdowns in just over three games played after a junior year in which he ran for 1,329 yards and 27 touchdowns. He would have to wait until he got to Ohio State to suit up for his next football game.

"In a couple of months, Bo Jackson is going to be back being Bo Jackson," Rotsky said. "Ohio State has nothing to worry about. They're getting one of the finest young men in the state of Ohio."



# ASK AN ANALYST

## with Bill Greene Of Buckeye Scoop

**Vero Beach, Fla., four-star interior offensive lineman Micah Smith (6-6, 325) visited Ohio State for the Minnesota game on Oct. 4. What do you think are the chances that the Buckeyes can flip him from UCLA?**

"I think they're really good. I mean, they've got a relationship with him for a long time. There was a point in time a year ago, maybe longer, where I thought he was done dealing with them. So UCLA is just, it's a disaster, coaching staff wise and everything. So if they want him and they push for him, I think they can get him. I don't see him ending up at UCLA. That's a dumpster fire and they're in big trouble there. Regardless of beating Penn State or not, I don't think that's going to hurt. I don't think that changes anything."

**Baltimore St. Frances Academy three-star defensive back Khmari Bing (6-0, 190) was also on campus that day and decommitted from Maryland soon after. What do you make of him as a prospect, and do you believe OSU will be able to pull off the flip?**

"Yeah, I do. I think they can get him if they want him. He's probably a little better than where he's ranked. The only thing for me is they've got two really good safeties committed right now. I think Khmari is a safety. I don't think he could play corner. They need corners. You've got Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic four-star cornerback Jordan Thomas (6-1, 185) committed, and he's

really good, I really like him. But instead of going and adding a third safety in this class, I mean, they need cornerbacks. So, would I take Khmari Bing, yeah, probably. He's pretty good, but they're going to need three corners in this class, in my opinion. Khmari being a luxury, how important is he right now? And that would be my only question. He's a good player. I like him, but they need help at that corner position, and that's where I would really be pushing right now. I'd be pushing for the corners, and I don't think Khmari can play corner."

**Who are some other prospects that Ohio State has a chance to flip before the early signing period?**

"To me, that's a tough one until these kids start visiting, so I don't know. So much of it is money right now, so I don't know. I try to look at it in terms of just positions. I'm looking at, they need another running back. I think they need another linebacker, which I think they're probably going to get Massillon (Ohio) Washington three-star linebacker Ja'Dyn Williams (6-2, 205). They need two more cornerbacks. So right now, it's tough to say. It's just such a money game anymore that it's almost like flipping someone is not like it used to be when it was about relationships. You pay the money, you can get them.

"I think the kid from Massillon is really good, Ja'Dyn Williams, and I think he fits what they want to do defensively, and I don't think they have anyone in this

class that does what he does from a linebacker point of view. So if that's a guy I'm looking at any day now to see a flip, I see a candidate there. You got Cleveland Glenville four-star linebacker Cincere Johnson's (6-3, 225) commitment. He's a thumper. Lewis Center (Ohio) Olentangy three-star linebacker CJ Sanna (6-3, 225) is good, but those guys are not at all what Ja'Dyn Williams is like. Ja'Dyn Williams is a poor man's Ryan Shazier, for lack of a better kid you can come up with. He's a blazer on the outside. I think that's the kind of guy they need. That's where they go next. I think they end up hitting on Ja'Dyn Williams in this class. And then corner-wise, I don't know. I don't have any names, really, but they need two more corners, in my opinion."

**Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School three-star tight end Corbyn Fordham (6-4, 215) flipped to Florida State on Oct. 3, the only Buckeye commit to decommit so far. Are there other commits who are exploring other options and might flip elsewhere?**

"There is a little bit of scuttlebutt, maybe, or rumors about Phoenix Mountain Pointe three-star offensive tackle Aaron Thomas (6-7, 300). I don't know how true it is, but his name has come up a little bit as someone that might be kind of snooping around. Florida State, I think, believes they've got a shot at him. I think his father played there, if I'm not mistaken. So that's someone I would be looking at. I would keep an eye on that guy, Aaron Thomas."

reaching out to him "hasn't stopped" and that he has a good relationship with Ducks head coach Dan Lanning, despite still being locked in with Ohio State.

Lanning and the Ducks also finished close behind Ohio State for Henry's high school teammate, four-star wide receiver Kayden Dixon-Wyatt (6-2, 180), and they are in contact with him as well to try to get him to go back on his pledge to Ohio State.

If things still remain the same for Henry, he said in the summer that as long as Hartline is at Ohio State, he will be locked into his commitment with the Buckeyes. He tweeted on April 1 that he was officially shutting down his recruitment, canceling visits to Oregon, Miami and USC that he had scheduled.

Henry, the No. 18 player in the country and the No. 2 wide receiver, received national honors during his senior season. He was included on the 2025 All-USA football team watch list, the only Ohio State commit to appear on the list.

He missed most of his junior season with an injury but hasn't missed a beat since he returned this season. In five games, Henry has 353 receiving yards on 18 catches with three touchdowns.

### Buckeyes Make More Offers

Ohio State has continued to offer more prospects since BSB last went to press. Multiple offers were to prospects who were on campus for the win over Minnesota on Oct. 4.

One was Columbus Watterson three-star offensive tackle Davis Seaman (6-5, 270). He is the No. 426 player in the country in the 2027 class, the No. 36 offensive tackle and the No. 13 player in the state of Ohio.

Seaman has 14 Division I offers, a list that includes Auburn, Illinois, Iowa

State, Pitt, Vanderbilt and West Virginia, among others. Since he received his offer, 247Sports Midwest recruiting analyst Allen Trieu made a "crystal ball" pick that Seaman will end up with the Buckeyes, which could be due to something he told 247Sports after the visit and offer.

"It was crazy, it didn't even feel real at first," Seaman said. "I've always been in Columbus, I've always wanted to be a Buckeye. So (the offer) was really cool. I feel like my whole family roots for Ohio State. I feel like they put guys consistently in the NFL every year. So I feel like it's just pretty tempting to go there.

"It's definitely going to be pretty hard (to turn down an offer from Ohio State). We'll see which way it goes, but it's definitely going to make (my decision) harder."

Kalamazoo (Mich.) Central four-star offensive tackle Dewey Young (6-5, 285) of the 2027 class also got a scholarship offer from the Buckeyes after his visit.

He is the No. 162 player in the country, the No. 16 offensive tackle and the No. 3 player in the state of Michigan, and he has received 18 Division I offers. That list includes Auburn, Colorado, Florida State, Indiana, Michigan State, Minnesota, Purdue and Pitt.

Youngstown (Ohio) Fitch offensive tackle Anthony Blalock (6-5, 305). It was his third offer, with the other two coming from Maryland and Syracuse. Blalock is unranked in the class of 2028 at this time.

The last prospect who was on campus for the Minnesota game who received an offer since then is Indian Head (Md.) Henry E. Lackey four-star defensive lineman Tyzon Swann (6-4, 235).

Swann is the No. 45 player in the country in his 2028 class and the No. 6 defensive lineman. He has 18 Division I offers already, including offers from Alabama, Florida State, Maryland, Michigan, Min-

nesota, Penn State, Tennessee and Texas A&M, among others.

The Buckeyes have made more offers since Oct. 4, as well, with Chicago Brother Rice five-star defensive end Kameron McGee (6-3, 234) receiving an offer from Johnson.

McGee is the No. 8 player in the country in the 2028 class, the No. 2 edge rusher and the No. 1 player in the state of Illinois. He already holds 25 Division I offers, including Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, LSU, Michigan, Michigan State, Minnesota, Nebraska, Notre Dame, Ole Miss, Oregon, Texas, USC and Washington, among many others.

McGee is an edge rusher and will be at the college level, but he also played as a wide receiver as a freshman in high school.

Goodyear (Ariz.) Desert Edge five-star edge rusher Jananie George (6-5, 245) also got an offer from Johnson. George is the No. 2 player in the class of 2028 and the No. 1 edge rusher, the only player ranked higher than McGee at the position.

George has 19 Division I offers, with some from Alabama, Florida, Indiana, LSU, Miami, Nebraska, Oregon, SMU, Tennessee, Texas A&M, USC and Wisconsin. Andrew Ivins, the director of scouting at 247Sports, says that George has to continue progressing, but "has all-conference and NFL upside."

Johnson also offered Bolingbrook, Ill., five-star edge rusher Darieon Prescott (6-6, 220). Prescott is the No. 26 player in the 2028 class and the No. 4 edge rusher. He has 14 Division I offers, which includes Florida State, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan State, Minnesota, Notre Dame, Tennessee and Vanderbilt.

The Buckeyes offered Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star linebacker Andre Alexander Jr. (6-1, 210) as well. He is the No. 112 player in the 2028 class, the No.

7 linebacker and the No. 22 player in the state of Florida. He holds 13 Division I offers from Duke, Florida State, Missouri, South Carolina and Tennessee, among others.

Another 2028 prospect who received an offer was Chattanooga (Tenn.) Baylor School four-star defensive end Braxton Rein (6-6, 230). He is ranked No. 43 in his class, the No. 6 edge rusher and the No. 1 player in the state of Tennessee and has just three Division I offers from Louisville, Ohio State and Vanderbilt.

### Other Notes And Tidbits

- Atlanta Banneker three-star offensive tackle Jared Doughty (6-6, 300) committed to Alabama on Oct. 5. Ohio State had recently offered Doughty, and the tackle scheduled an official visit to Columbus for the Nov. 1 game when Penn State comes to town, but it's unclear whether he will still make that visit. He is the No. 576 prospect in the country and the No. 52 offensive tackle, and he also had official visits scheduled to Missouri, Alabama and Auburn.

- Pickerington (Ohio) Central three-star safety RJ Holland (6-2, 175) has scheduled a visit to Ohio State for the Nov. 15 game against UCLA. The 2026 recruit is the No. 1,421-ranked player in the country, the No. 128 safety and the No. 66 player in the state of Ohio and holds 17 Division I offers. He has not been offered by the Buckeyes.

- Pickerington (Ohio) North three-star safety Amar'e Miller (6-1, 175) has also scheduled a visit to Ohio State. He will be in Columbus for the Buckeyes' Nov. 22 game against Rutgers. Miller, the No. 1,745 player in the country, No. 159 safety and No. 90 player in Ohio, is committed to Navy and has been since June 25.



# Franklin Fired By Penn State After Third Loss

The storm has officially reached the Penn State football program.

Following the Nittany Lions' 22-21 loss to Northwestern at Beaver Stadium on Oct. 11, Penn State fired head coach James Franklin, according to multiple reports.

BIG TEN  
NOTES  
Sam Cipriani

Penn State's loss to the Wildcats was its third-straight loss. The first two came as a double overtime loss to Oregon, 30-24, on Sept. 27, and a 42-37 loss to UCLA on Oct. 4.

Franklin was asked about his status with the program immediately after the loss to Northwestern.

"Yeah, for me, it's always been about our players," Franklin said. "And those guys are hurting right now. And the fans are frustrated. And I get it. I totally get it. I totally get it. We have great fans here. We get unbelievable support. And I understand their frustration, trust me. We're as frustrated as anybody, the guys in the locker room.

"I love those kids. I am committed to those players in that locker room. I've been that way for 12 years. I've been that way for 15 years of my head coaching career, and I've been that way for 30 years. That won't change. That won't change."

Franklin's buyout is reported to be roughly \$50 million, and it wasn't going to drop much after the season, going down to \$48.6 million according to Pete Nakos of On3.

Franklin led the Nittany Lions to an appearance in the CFP semifinal last season, losing to Notre Dame, after downing SMU and Boise State in the first two rounds. However, Penn State is unlikely to make it back to the playoffs this season after a 3-3 start to the year.

The Nittany Lions coach finishes his tenure with a 104-45 record and a 4-21 mark against top-10-ranked teams. Franklin's tenure with Penn State was defined by his inability to beat conference rivals Ohio State and Michigan, with a 4-17 combined record against the two teams in his time in State College, Pa. He only beat the Buckeyes once in 2016.

Associate head coach Terry Smith will serve as Penn State's interim head coach for the remainder of the year.

The capper for the Nittany Lions came in the late fourth quarter of its matchup against Northwestern when Penn State quarterback Drew Allar attempted to scramble for a first down on third-and-4.

Allar took a big hit from Wildcats linebacker Mac Uihlein and remained down on the field for multiple minutes before being helped to the sideline by training staff.

Franklin announced after the game that Allar would miss the remainder of the season for Penn State, another blow to the Lions.

Backup quarterback Ethan Grunkmeyer

will likely take over at quarterback following Allar's injury.

## IU Takes Down Oregon At Autzen

Indiana pulled off a major upset in Eugene, Ore., as No. 7 Hoosiers (6-0, 3-0) defeated No. 3 Oregon (5-1, 2-1) 30-20 at Autzen Stadium on Oct. 11 in a clash of two of the Big Ten's top teams.

In a battle of two of the nation's top quarterbacks, Indiana's Fernando Mendoza outdueled Dante Moore. The Hoosier quarterback completed 20 of 31 passes for 215 yards, one touchdown and an interception that was taken back for a pick-six. Oregon's Moore, on the other side, threw for 186 yards, one touchdown and two picks on 21-of-34 passing while the Ducks' offense was able to find the end zone just once.

Mendoza's performance featured eight connections with star wide receiver Elijah Sarratt, who took those eight catches for 121 yards and a score. Indiana running back Roman Hemby added 70 yards and two touchdowns for the Hoosiers.

Oregon tied the game at 20 early in the fourth quarter on Mendoza's lone interception, a 35-yard pick-six by defensive back Brandon Finney, but it was all Indiana from there. The Hoosiers rallied for 10 unanswered points in the final six and a half minutes to clinch the victory. Sarratt's touchdown put Indiana up by seven before Hoosier kicker Brendan Franke sealed the win with a 22-yard field goal.

Following its upset victory, Indiana replaced Oregon at third in the AP Poll, while the Ducks fell five spots to No. 8.

## Analyst Says Ducks' Moore No. 1 QB

ESPN football analyst Louis Riddick believes Oregon redshirt sophomore quarterback Dante Moore could be the top quarterback draft prospect this season.

Riddick said on "Get Up" on ESPN on Oct. 8 that among all the quarterbacks he had evaluated this season, Moore, who has guided Oregon to a 5-1 start, was his top quarterback prospect, pointing to his mechanics and poise as key traits that separate him from the rest of the nation's elite.

"Of the guys that I have seen, whether it be in person or on tape, it would be Dante Moore from Oregon," Riddick said. "The way he played against Penn State, as far as how big he is, how mobile he is, how confident he plays, the different arm angles he can throw from, on platform, off platform – he's got the entire package."

In six games for the Ducks, Moore has completed 72.0 percent of his passes for 1,396 yards and 15 touchdowns. He's also added 95 yards on the ground, averaging 2.9 yards per carry.

Although Riddick highlighted Moore as his top prospect, the former NFL safety said he hadn't gotten the chance to look at some of the nation's best, including fellow Big Ten quarterback Fernando Mendoza of Indiana and Carson Beck of Miami (Fla.).

"Now I have not seen Fernando Mendoza at Indiana, although I watched his

tape from Cal last year, and I haven't seen Carson Beck in person and I really haven't studied his tape either," Riddick said. "Right now, there is a major competition for the No. 1 spot when the draft rolls around.

Riddick culminated his thoughts with high praise for the Ducks' signal-caller.

"Oregon, you've got yourself one right there," Riddick said.

## Fisch Name To Watch For UCLA Job

According to On3's Pete Nakos, Washington head coach Jedd Fisch is a coach who has sparked interest from fellow Big Ten program UCLA.

The Bruins began the season 0-3, firing head coach Deshaun Foster on Sept. 14, just a day after an embarrassing 35-10 loss to New Mexico at home. Then, after the Bruins fell to Big Ten bottom-feeder Northwestern 17-14 after their off week, UCLA and offensive coordinator Tino Sunseri mutually agreed to part ways just three days later on Sept. 30.

With the program cleaning house, it promoted former special assistant to the head coach Tim Skipper to lead the program, and former tight ends coach Jerry Neuheisel as its offensive coordinator.

Nakos reported that with Fisch's ties to UCLA booster Casey Wasserman, the Huskies head coach could be in line for a job offer with the Bruins in Los Angeles.

"Multiple sources have told On3 to keep an eye on Washington's Jedd Fisch, who is a former UCLA offensive coordinator and interim head coach and spent two seasons with the LA Rams," Nakos wrote. "Fisch is off to a 4-1 start to the season and has a \$10 million buyout if he leaves Seattle. Deeper than his connections to Los Angeles, Fisch has ties to UCLA booster Casey Wasserman."

Following the departure of former Washington head coach Kalen DeBoer to Alabama, Fisch left Arizona, where he coached from 2021-23, to become the head coach of the Huskies. Fisch accumulated a 6-7 record in his only full season with Washington in 2024, and has led the Huskies to a 5-1 record this season after beating Rutgers 38-19 on Oct. 10, with just a single loss to No. 1 Ohio State.

Nakos also said that Arizona head coach Brent Brennan, Baylor head coach Dave Aranda, and Oregon defensive coordinator Tosh Lupoi are other names that UCLA has thrown around as its next head coach.

## Washington Senator Against Private Equity In B1G

The Big Ten announced Oct. 1 that it was going to look into a \$2 billion partnership with private equity firms that would place control of its media rights and other assets under a new, partially investor-owned entity.

However, not all parties believe the idea will benefit the conference.

Washington senator Maria Cantwell, who is the ranking member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, sent a letter to Big Ten officials, including interim Michigan presi-

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2025 Standings

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Indiana	3	0	1.000	6	0	1.000
Ohio State	3	0	1.000	6	0	1.000
USC	3	1	0.750	5	1	0.833
Nebraska	2	1	0.667	5	1	0.833
Oregon	2	1	0.667	5	1	0.833
Washington	2	1	0.667	5	1	0.833
Iowa	2	1	0.667	4	2	0.667
Michigan	2	1	0.667	4	2	0.667
Minnesota	2	1	0.667	4	2	0.667
Northwestern	2	1	0.667	4	2	0.667
UCLA	2	1	0.667	2	4	0.333
Illinois	2	2	0.500	5	2	0.714
Maryland	1	2	0.333	4	2	0.667
Michigan State	0	3	0.000	3	3	0.500
Penn State	0	3	0.000	3	3	0.500
Rutgers	0	3	0.000	3	3	0.500
Purdue	0	3	0.000	2	4	0.333
Wisconsin	0	3	0.000	2	4	0.333

Oct. 10 Game

Washington 38, Rutgers 19

Oct. 11 Games

UCLA 38, Michigan State 13  
Ohio State 34, Illinois 16  
Northwestern 22, Penn State 21  
Nebraska 34, Maryland 31  
Indiana 30, Oregon 20  
Iowa 37, Wisconsin 0  
USC 31, Michigan 13  
Minnesota 27, Purdue 20

Oct. 17 game

Nebraska at Minnesota, 8 p.m.

Oct. 18 Games

Washington at Michigan, noon  
Purdue at Northwestern, 3 p.m.  
Michigan State at Indiana, 3:30 p.m.  
Ohio State at Wisconsin, 3:30 p.m.  
Oregon at Rutgers, 6:30 p.m.  
Maryland at UCLA, 7 p.m.  
Penn State at Iowa, 7 p.m.  
USC at Notre Dame, 7:30 p.m.

All times Eastern

dent Domenico Grasso, detailing her frustrations and concerns with the league's proposal of a private equity partnership.

In her letter, Cantwell stated that she is concerned about the proposed private equity deal.

"This proposed deal with a private equity investor may be counter to your university's academic goals, may require the sale of university assets to a private investor, and may affect the tax-exempt purpose of those assets," the letter read.

Cantwell highlighted multiple financial risks of the Big Ten's proposed private equity deal, including the fact that tiered revenue could further widen financial gaps among the conference's schools.

She also raised broader concerns about the possibility of private investors profiting from college athletics.

"The fact that we're bringing private equity into something that is, in my view, owned by the American public in college sports, is outlandish," Cantwell wrote.

Cantwell concluded by criticizing the lack of transparency from the Big Ten's administration, noting that some university



trustees had not been fully briefed.

“As the leader entrusted with the long-term prosperity of your institution, you should require a full and transparent description of this potential deal, including the payout to private investors and conference administrators,” Cantwell wrote. “Remember, the conference reports to you.”

MSU QB, WR Fight After Sack

During Michigan State’s 38-27 loss to Nebraska on Oct. 4, tensions boiled on the sidelines as the Spartans, who led 21-14 late in the third quarter, gave up 24 unanswered points in just under 12 minutes.

Down 31-21, Michigan State found itself with the ball on its own 27-yard line at fourth-and-8 before quarterback Aidan Chiles was pummeled by Cornhuskers defensive lineman Cameron Lenhardt for

a 10-yard sack. Following the play, Chiles was seen on the sideline getting into it with one of his top wide receivers, Nick Marsh.

In the week following, Chiles downplayed the dispute between him and Marsh, stating that it was simply two passionate players frustrated at the moment.

“Just two competitive football players being passionate about the game,” Chiles said on Oct. 7. “Things aren’t going our way, and we were both frustrated. That’s just how it goes.”

Chiles added that the brief argument was behind them and both have since moved forward without issue.

“We’re cool now,” Chiles said. “It is what it is. We talked about it, and we sit next to each other on the plane. We had our conversation. It looks worse than it was, but it is what it is.”

Michigan State head coach Jonathan

Smith said the exchange was simply the result of competitive emotions boiling over, and that the pair are in good spirits with each other.

“I do think you’re talking about a couple guys that it means a lot to them and are pretty competitive,” Smith said. “Those guys love each other and all that.”

U-M Receiver Moore Transferring

Michigan wide receiver Fredrick Moore is no longer with the program and will forgo the rest of his 2025 season to redshirt and enter the transfer portal.

A three-star recruit, Moore was the No. 521 overall player and the 72nd-ranked wide receiver in the class of 2023. Moore played in 13 games for the Wolverines as a freshman in 2023, catching four passes for 32 yards on Michigan’s national championship team.

The St. Louis, Mo., native had another relatively quiet year for Michigan in 2024 with just 11 catches for 128 yards and a touchdown. His touchdown came in the Wolverines’ 19-13 win over Alabama in the ReliaQuest Bowl on Dec. 31. He went for three catches and 37 yards and a toe-tap touchdown reception on the left edge of the end zone in the game.

Despite a promising end to his 2024 campaign, Moore has made little impact for the Wolverines in 2025. This season, the junior receiver primarily appeared on special teams for Michigan, recording a tackle in the team’s 34-17 win over New Mexico. Moore has played in just 18 snaps at wide receiver this season and didn’t record a single catch.

Moore will have two seasons of eligibility remaining following his transfer.

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1985

Ohio State linebacker Pepper Johnson was not convinced that the unbeaten Indiana Hoosiers had been going up against foes quite as strong as the Buckeyes.

“Indiana came into the game averaging about 500 yards a game,” Johnson said. “But we looked at Indiana as having to get 500 yards against us. They were playing other teams. They were not playing Ohio State.”

Johnson and his mates did a number on the Hoosiers, allowing Indiana 302 total yards, 48 of those in the final minute against the Buckeye reserves in the 48-7 victory.

“We played with a little more enthusiasm today than we did the last couple of weeks, and it made a big difference,” said Johnson, who had nine tackles in the game. “We were challenging those guys as much as possible. We disguised the blitzes. Me and Chris (Spielman) acted like we were coming, and then we’d send Byron (Lee) and (Eric) Kumerow around the outside.”

35 Years Ago — 1990

If anyone wanted to criticize Ohio State head coach John Cooper for being overly conservative near the end of the Buckeyes’ 27-27 tie at Indiana, they would have to go through Jim Colletto, Bill Young and Greg Frey first.

All three agreed that Cooper’s conservative running call on third down with 51 seconds remaining in the game was the correct one in that situation.

After trailing 27-17 in the fourth quarter, the Hoosiers came back to knot the score at 27 with 1:09 remaining in the game.

The Buckeyes got the ball at their own 20 with every intention of trying to move far enough to allow placekicker Tim Williams a chance to win the game.

But things got off to a bad start when junior flanker Bernard Edwards couldn’t hold on to a short pass from Frey on first down.

On the next play, the Buckeyes tried to fool the Hoosiers, running a delayed draw play with redshirt freshman running back Raymont Harris. But Harris gained only 3 yards, setting up a third-and-7.

Colletto sent in a pass play, but Cooper overruled his offensive coordinator, changing the play to a run, and Harris was stopped at the line for no gain.

30 Years Ago — 1995

For the third week in a row, Ohio State outplayed its opponent in the second half, and for the third week in a row, the Buckeyes were in a position where they had to.

Ohio State’s unbeaten string survived another ranked challenge as the Buckeyes played nearly perfect football in the fourth quarter and defeated host Wisconsin 27-16 on a dreary, blustery Oct. 14 in Camp Randall Stadium.

The first three quarters, though, were nothing to write home about. From the OSU perspective, they were pretty much a collection of turnovers, bad punts and missed assignments.

Fourth-ranked Ohio State trailed the 21st-ranked Badgers 9-7 at halftime and 16-13 after three quarters. But a pair of touchdown runs by Eddie George, who finished with 141 yards on 26 carries, were the difference for the Buckeyes in the fourth quarter.

25 Years Ago — 2000

You could call it the Ohio State Redemption Tour, if you like, but OSU tailback Derek Combs and his teammates had another name for it.

“We’re calling it the Year of the Comeback,” Combs said moments after he and the Buckeyes rolled to a 23-7 win over Wis-

consin on Oct. 7 in Madison. Everybody beat us last year. This is our year to get back at them. That’s what we talked about all week.

“We had a lot of doubters and people who didn’t think we could play a big game, but this shows what we can do.”

Combs ripped off a pair of dazzling touchdown runs for 80 yards and 21 yards to cap OSU’s first two possessions and the eighth-ranked Buckeyes cruised to a win over the 24th-ranked Badgers.

The victory left Ohio State (5-0, 2-0 Big Ten) as the only undefeated Big Ten team, although Northwestern (5-1, 3-0) technically remained a half-game ahead in the conference standings after its 52-33 pounding of Indiana.

20 Years Ago — 2005

A No. 6 overall ranking in both major polls. Continuing aspirations for a second national championship in four seasons. An undefeated Big Ten season and the school’s first outright conference championship since 1984.

It all melted into the early autumn mist of Beaver Stadium for the Ohio State football team on Oct. 8 as it absorbed a 17-10 defeat at the hands of a resurgent Penn State, a loss that sent the Buckeyes reeling into the middle of the conference standings and left them searching for answers in a season that once held so much promise.

Ohio State not only tumbled out of the national top 10 for the first time that season, it also descended into a tie for fifth place in the jumbled Big Ten standings. The Nittany Lions ruled the roost with a perfect 3-0 conference mark, the only unbeaten conference team left just three weeks into the Big Ten season.

“I really don’t know what to say,” said OSU offensive lineman and senior co-captain Rob Sims after the game. “Before this game, I thought we were the best team in the country. I know that Texas beat us, but we could have just as easily won that game. We wanted to keep going after that, win out, and maybe play again in the Rose Bowl. I guess that’s pretty much out now.”

15 Years Ago — 2010

It was a pretty darn good day to be a Buckeye.

One week after suffering a strained quadriceps muscle in a disappointingly close road victory against Illinois, junior quarterback Terrelle Pryor bounced back with a career-high 334 passing yards to help No. 2 Ohio State defeat visiting Indiana by a 38-10 score. With the victory, head coach Jim Tressel inched his career win total at the university to 100, making him the third-fastest Big Ten coach to reach that plateau.

As if that was not reason enough for celebration, the evening of Oct. 9 would prove to be even sweeter. About four hours after the final fans had filtered out of Ohio Stadium on a sun-drenched afternoon, the Buckeyes got some help in the hunt for a national championship as No. 1 Alabama was handed a 35-21 defeat playing at No. 19 South Carolina.

As a result, the Buckeyes (6-0, 2-0 Big Ten) ascended to the top spot in the polls for the first time since entering the 2008 BCS National Championship Game ranked No. 1.

10 Years Ago — 2015

The more things changed at Ohio State this season, the more they stayed the same.

On a night in which the Buckeyes donned all-black uniforms complete with black matte helmets, the first such look in program history, the way the night played out was as familiar as it gets. The Buckeyes had some struggles, but they won with better talent

and did so convincingly thanks to some in-game adjustments. After the game, head coach Urban Meyer began his opening statement the same way he always did.

“Without any hesitation, our deepest gratitude to our incredible fans and support,” he said. “The Buckeye Walk was incredible. The Skull Session was incredible. (There are) a lot of great places in college football, and this is a special place. A night game in the Horseshoe, I remember the first one against Nebraska back in, whenever that was, 2012, and this is a special night.”

His Ohio State team had just dispatched Penn State with relative ease, pulling away for a 38-10 victory in front of 108,423 fans – the second-largest crowd to ever see a game at Ohio Stadium behind the 2014 win against Michigan. It was played with one of the more unique atmospheres to ever grace the stadium, serving as the backdrop for the team’s seventh win. With everyone in the stands donning black and embracing the “Dark Night” theme, it felt like a party from the outset and throughout the first home night game of the season.

Five Years Ago — 2020

Just as it had done in four of the last five years, Ohio State named seven team captains for the 2020 season.

The group included a pair of returning captains in linebacker Tuf Borland and defensive end Jonathon Cooper, as well as offensive guard Wyatt Davis, quarterback Justin Fields, linebacker Justin Hilliard, center Josh Myers and cornerback Shaun Wade.

“I think this is really impressive in so many areas,” head coach Ryan Day after the captains were named. “When you look at their list of accomplishments in their careers as a group, it’s already really long.

“I promise you our leadership has kept this team hungry and I think we’re training right now at a championship level. It’s really cool to see.”

A native of Bolingbrook, Ill., Borland becomes just the second three-time captain in Ohio State history, joining former quarterback J.T. Barrett (2015-17). He had registered 180 tackles, 15½ tackles for loss and five sacks in 44 career games, including 34 starts.

One Year Ago — 2024

Through five games of the 2024 season, the biggest criticism against Ohio State was that it hadn’t been battle-tested, playing three cupcake games against lower-level teams for the nonconference schedule and rolling over the first two Big Ten teams that were unlucky enough to draw the Buckeyes on their schedule.

The Buckeyes would face their first real test in Week 7, where – in front of an Autzen Stadium-record crowd of 60,129 – they engaged in a back-and-forth fight against No. 3 Oregon. It was a battle between two heavyweight contenders and now Big Ten rivals that came down to the final drive, with the Buckeyes down by just one point, needing to get into field-goal range to give Jayden Fielding a chance at sending the Scarlet and Gray into their off week with a perfect 6-0 record and signature win on their resumé.

But after a game full of the Ducks and Buckeyes trading punches, the knockout blow was thrown by none other than a referee, who called an offensive pass interference penalty on freshman wide receiver Jeremiah Smith when OSU had already gotten itself into field-goal range but was moved back an extra 15 yards to the Oregon 43-yard line. That proved too much for Ohio State’s offense to make up for, with the game ending in a 32-31 loss for Ohio State.



# Thornton Says Buckeyes Will Beat U-M Twice

At Big Ten media days on Oct. 9, Ohio State senior guard Bruce Thornton made a bold proclamation about the Buckeyes' home-and-home series this season with rival Michigan.

## COURT REPORT Greg Wilson

"We're going to beat them twice before I leave out," Thornton told The Columbus Dispatch. "I feel like there's no better feeling than that. I feel like we're very capable this year of making that happen. Why not us?"

The head coaches of the Ohio State and Michigan basketball programs, Jake Diebler and Dusty May, worked to make sure the conference schedule will continue to include a home-and-home series between the two rivals each year. Even with expansion in the Big Ten, the games obviously still matter to the players.

The Wolverines are projected to be one of the top teams in the conference coming off a year in which they finished third with a 14-6 league record (27-10 overall). They return former Buckeye Roddy Gayle Jr. for his second season with the team. He scored 9.8 points per game and brought down an aver-

age of 3.4 rebounds last year on the way to a Wolverines' Sweet 16 run last season. They also return graduate guard Nimari Burnett and graduate forward Will Tschetter.

But some of the biggest contributors for last year's Michigan team, Vladislav Goldin and Tre Donaldson, will not be back. The roster is built of mostly newcomers, four transfers and four freshmen, headlined by graduate forward Yaxel Lendeborg, who was considered the top player in the transfer portal out of UAB.

In three seasons with the Buckeyes, Thornton has played Michigan four times and has gone 1-3 in those games. An 84-61 victory at Value City Arena on March 3, 2024, was the only victory he was part of.

Last season's game was an 86-83 victory for Michigan at Value City Arena on Feb. 16. The Buckeyes were able to tie the game up at 80 apiece with just over two minutes remaining but were ultimately plagued by rebounding issues, getting beaten on the boards 46 to 31.

This season, the Buckeyes will first go to Crisler Center in Ann Arbor for a Jan. 23 contest against the Wolverines before hosting them at the Schottenstein Center on



Bruce Thornton

## 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

Feb. 8 for the second of two games.

### Thornton On All-Big Ten Team

When the conference preseason team was released on Oct. 7, Thornton was one of 10 players included.

Thornton is entering his final season of eligibility for the Buckeyes after last season, when he averaged 17.7 points, 4.6 assists and 3.4 rebounds per game while making 50.1 percent of his shots.

His performance last season earned him a spot on the All-Big Ten second team.

He was included on the preseason All-Big Ten team along with senior Iowa guard Bennett Stirtz, graduate Lendeborg, senior Northwestern forward Nick Martinelli, senior Oregon center Nate Bittle, junior Oregon guard Jackson Shelstad, senior Purdue forward Trey Kaufman-Renn, senior Purdue guard Braden Smith, senior UCLA guard Donovan Dent and junior Wisconsin guard John Blackwell.

Purdue's Smith was named the preseason conference player of the year for the second straight season. He was also the only unanimous selection of the 10 players. It's the third straight year that the honor goes to a Boilermaker after Zach Edey was before the 2023-24 season.

### OSU Ninth In B1G Media Poll

Ohio State is looking to improve this season after a 10th-place finish in the Big Ten last year that was enough to get it into the conference tournament, but it fell short of getting the Buckeyes back into the NCAA Tournament.

In a poll voted on by media that cover Big

Ten basketball, conducted by the Dispatch and the Indy Star, the Buckeyes were voted ninth in the conference in preseason rankings. They were behind Purdue, Michigan, Illinois, UCLA, Michigan State, Wisconsin, Oregon and Iowa, the team that knocked them out of the conference tournament last season.

The Boilermakers received 25 of 28 first-place votes while the Wolverines got the other three. The Spartans were regular-season champions last season with a 17-3 conference record (30-7 overall).

The poll also included first- and second-team All-Big Ten preseason votes, with Thornton as the only OSU representative. He was a second-team selection at guard behind Smith (a unanimous selection), Dent and Stirtz.

Smith was chosen as the preseason player of the year in the poll, while Lendeborg was voted the newcomer of the year and Penn State first-year guard Kayden Mingo was voted as the freshman of the year.

Ohio State freshman forward Amare Bynum received one vote to be freshman of the year. Diebler believes Bynum will be able to make an impact in his first season with the team.

"Amare is a special young man, and he's going to be a special player and we're anticipating him being really impactful for us," Diebler said at Big Ten media days. "He's got a couple of things going for him. He's got elite maturity."

"He wants to be coached, and I think the other thing is he's got the physical tools to be impactful. He's got some real physicality to him as a freshman, and the consistency at which he operates and keeps coming back and asking for more work – it's been

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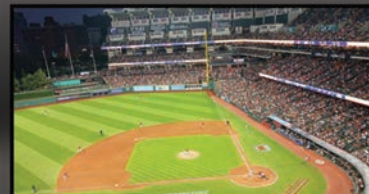
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impressive.”

Although sometimes it can take a while for freshmen to get acclimated to the college game, Diebler believes Bynum will be able to make an impact by the time the first game on Nov. 3 rolls around.

Bucks Dealing With Injuries

Diebler reported at Big Ten media days that there have already been some injuries that have interrupted the preseason for the Buckeyes, though he didn't expect them to last long.

“We're not as healthy as we were two weeks ago, but nothing new and alarming that's going to be a long-term thing,” he said. “We've missed a couple practices with some guys to typical preseason injuries, but we were a little light in practice (Oct. 8). Hopefully (Oct. 10) we'll be close to back to full strength.”

The head coach didn't specify who was dealing with those injuries, but the open practice held on Oct. 4 might be a hint as to who has been sidelined temporarily.

Transfer center Josh Ojianwuna was on the bench watching as the team scrimmaged, as expected after tearing his ACL in February, while sophomore forward Colin White participated in most drills. But junior forward Devin Royal was also not suited up and watched the scrimmage from the sideline, though he was up and walking around with his team while Ojianwuna sat on the bench throughout most of the practice.

Diebler still isn't sure exactly when Ojianwuna will be available for the Buckeyes.

“He's working extremely hard,” Diebler said. “He's progressing well. What that means, I just don't know yet, but my hope is we'll have some more clarity as to light at the end of the tunnel at the end of this month, early next month.”

OSU-Vols To Play 'Secret' Scrimmage

Ohio State's season will unofficially begin on Oct. 26 when it hosts Ohio for a public scrimmage at Value City Arena.

But according to Tennessee men's basketball head coach Rick Barnes, his team will match up with the Buckeyes on Oct. 18 in a closed scrimmage.

“We are going to do a closed scrimmage with Ohio State, which we will get some things out of it,” Barnes said on “The Mike Keith Show” on Oct. 2. “But it won't be the same. I wish we really could play four or five of those exhibition games.”

It will be the first time the Buckeyes match up with former Ohio State forward Felix Okpara, who transferred to Tennessee following the 2023-24 season. In his first season with the Volunteers, he averaged 7.1 points and 6.4 rebounds.

Diebler Wants Rule Changes

In an appearance on the “Views From The Schott” podcast, Diebler was asked about any changes that he would make to college basketball if he had the ability to.

He talked about three things he would want changed, with NIL spending, the number of games on the schedule and the new coach's challenge that will be implemented this season as the things he would target.

Diebler said that in the midst of the evolution of the college game, with NIL and revenue sharing still being fairly new, it's hard to know whether promises made to recruits will still be able to be upheld if rules change before they officially join a team.

“The first rule would be setting in stone some things so we actually know what next year looks like,” Diebler said. “That's the hardest part about college basketball right now. We seem to be the only entity that can't fully plan ahead because we don't know what the rules are and what next year looks like.”

“I think I'd find a way to move to a sport-specific cap in NIL. A place like Ohio State, when you have our passionate and supportive fan base and some of the resources that we have, the brand, all of that stuff, we should be able to utilize that weight across the board.”

Diebler also said that he would want there to be more games on the schedule each year and that he approves of the new coach's challenge he will be able to use this season that was approved in June.

Five-Star To Commit Oct. 21

The Buckeyes have been in the running for Hudson (Ohio) Western Reserve Academy five-star small forward Anthony Thompson (6-8, 205) for a long time and hosted him on an official visit the weekend of the football team's 14-7 win over Texas in late August.

Now, after making six total official visits, Thompson is ready to commit to a program, setting his date for Oct. 21.

The Buckeyes are still in the running, along with North Carolina, Michigan, Indiana, Texas and Kentucky, each of which he also took official visits to during the fall. He was scheduled to visit Purdue as well, but he canceled that visit and didn't reschedule.

Thompson is rated the No. 8 recruit in the 2026 class, the No. 2 small forward and the No. 1 player in the state of Ohio according to 247Sports composite rankings.

National basketball analyst Travis Brannan of 247Sports wrote that it very well could be a battle between the in-state Buckeyes and Indiana, but a lot could happen before the day he pledges.

Should he commit to Ohio State, he would be a huge addition to Garfield Heights, Ohio, four-star point guard Marcus Johnson (6-2, 180) and Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Prolific Prep four-star power forward Alex Smith (6-9, 195).

Other Notes And Tidbits

• Ohio State will host Orlando (Fla.) Southeastern Prep five-star center Obinna Ekezie Jr. (7-0, 220) for an unofficial visit on Nov. 1, the day the Buckeye football team matches up against Penn State. Ekezie is the No. 3 player in the 2027 class, the No. 1 center and the No. 3 player in the state of Florida.

• The Buckeyes extended a scholarship offer to Indianapolis Pike four-star combo guard Jahari Miller (6-2, 190) on Oct. 4. He is the No. 61-ranked player in the 2027 class, the No. 8 combo guard and the No. 4 player in the state of Indiana and has eight Division I offers, including offers from Alabama, DePaul, Florida State and Oklahoma State.

BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL (6-0)

Aug. 30 TEXAS, W 14-7.

Sept. 6 GRAMBLING STATE, W 70-0; 13 OHIO, W 37-9; 27 at Washington, W 24-6.

Oct. 4 MINNESOTA, W 42-3; 11 at Illinois, W 34-16; 18 at Wisconsin.

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

FIELD HOCKEY (7-5, 3-1)

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, L 3-2; 26 at Rutgers, L 2-1 (OT); 28 at Delaware, W 4-0.

Oct. 3 MARYLAND, W 2-1 (OT); 5 PENN STATE, W 2-0; 12 MICHIGAN, W 1-0; 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, 6th/18; 29-30 Windon Memorial Classic at Lake Forest, Ill., 3rd/16.

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, 1st/12.

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

MEN'S SOCCER (5-6, 2-3)

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,

W 3-2; 26 at Rutgers, L 2-0; 29 UCLA, W 2-1.

Oct. 3 WISCONSIN, L 1-0; 10 at Indiana, L 4-2; 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 (6-2-6, 2-1-5)

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, T 0-0; 21 NEBRASKA, T 0-0; 25 at Northwestern, T 0-0; 28 at Illinois, W 3-0.

Oct. 5 at Michigan State, T 1-1; 9 OREGON, W 1-0; 12 WASHINGTON, L 1-0; 16 at Rutgers; 19 at Maryland; 26 at Penn State.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL (3-11, 0-6)

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 Beavercreek Invitational in Dayton vs. Ohio, W 3-0; 13 Beavercreek Invitational in Dayton vs. Wright State, L 3-2; 19 VIRGINIA, L 3-2; 21 TROY, W 3-2; 26 UCLA, L 3-2; 27 USC, L 3-0.

Oct. 3 at Washington, L 3-1; 4 at Oregon, L 3-0; 9 PURDUE, L 3-0; 12 at Minnesota, L 3-0; 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.



# McGuff Says Lemmilä May Be Healthy By Opener

Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff gave a positive update on sophomore center Elsa Lemmilä during a media availability on Oct. 2. Lemmilä, who suffered a season-ending foot injury late last year, is on track to be back in time for the Buckeyes' first game against Coppin State on Nov. 9, according to McGuff.

## DOUBLE DRIBBLE Bobby Gorbett

"She should be good to go, knock on wood, if she stays healthy to start the season," McGuff said. "We're expecting a lot of big things out of her, and I think she showed last year a lot of her talent. She's got a unique skill set with her size and length and athleticism, and I think she could have a great year, but part of that's going to be, obviously, staying healthy."

Lemmilä had a great freshman season for the Buckeyes. Lemmilä, a 6-6 center, averaged only 4.1 points per game for the Buckeyes, but she used her size and frame to help the team as a rebounder and rim-protector. She finished the season averaging a team-high 1.9 blocks per game, and her 4.8 rebounds per game were the third most on the team. During some stretches in the season, Lemmilä was even taking away minutes from then Ohio State center Ajae Petty. McGuff said he only wishes that Lemmilä had finished the season healthy.

"It's tough. It's always really hard, especially so late in the year," McGuff said

of Lemmilä's injury. "If she just could have gotten through a little more, gotten to the offseason. If she could have been healthy – because I think that she's doing really well right now, but I think she would be even further along had she had a summer, because she spent a lot of the summer rehabbing and getting healthy. She's going to be a little behind from that standpoint.

"I do think she'll be ready on day one, when we start playing games, to play the minutes we want her to play. In terms of her development, I think she's got a lot of potential, still just scratching the surface of where she could be. This summer could have gone a long way towards getting close to that, but I still think she could have a great year."

McGuff said while Lemmilä has been rehabbing her injury, he's seen a couple of other players, including redshirt freshman and Florida transfer Kylee Kitts, step up in her place, and he expects the team to use a committee approach at the position.

"Ella Hobbs, who redshirted last year, should get some minutes there. She's had a good summer and preseason so far. I think Kylie, too, will get some minutes in that position as well. It will be a little bit by committee with those three."

## Cambridge On All-B1G Preseason Team

Ohio State point guard Jaloní Cambridge, last season's Big Ten Freshman of the Year, is expected to have another big season as a sophomore. Cambridge was named to the preseason All-Big Ten team by both the media and coaches on Oct. 2.

As a freshman, Cambridge had an outstanding year as the Buckeyes' starting point guard. She averaged 15.4 points, 4.5 rebounds and 3.9 assists while shooting 42.9 percent from the field.

Cambridge, a five-star recruit out of high school, earned All-Big Ten first-team honors last year.

Cambridge was the only Buckeye to

earn preseason All-Big Ten honors. UCLA center Lauren Betts was named the preseason Player of the Year, which comes as no surprise. Betts, a 6-7 center, was a first-team All-American last season and led the Bruins to the Final Four of the NCAA tournament.

The Big Ten also announced the top five teams in the preseason poll for the coaches and the media on Oct. 2. The Buckeyes were projected to finish fifth by both groups. Each poll had the Buckeyes below UCLA, Maryland, Michigan and USC.

## B1G Releases Game Times

The times and broadcasting networks of Ohio State's conference games were revealed by the Big Ten on Oct. 7. Fourteen of the Buckeyes' 18 conference games will be broadcast on either the Big Ten Network, Peacock, FS1 or FOX. Ohio State's matchups against Illinois on Jan. 7, Penn State on Jan. 14, Oregon on Feb. 8 and Minnesota on Feb. 18 will all stream on Big Ten Plus.

A couple of the more significant Big Ten games on the Buckeyes' schedule will come toward the end of February. Ohio State will play Maryland on Feb. 15 at 2 p.m. on FS1 and one week later will face USC at home for a game that will be broadcast on either FOX or FS1 and will be played at either noon or 2 p.m.

McGuff was a slight critic of the way his team's 2024-25 schedule was arranged, because Ohio State had to take on elite programs such as UCLA and USC in back-to-back road games. This time around, McGuff said, because the Big Ten is so strong, the conference schedule would provide his team with a challenge no matter what.

"It's going to be hard no matter what, because the league is so tough," McGuff said. "We play Maryland twice, who's going to be one of the best teams in the league, so that will make it very challenging, and the travel will be tough again. We'll have a northwest swing, and Oregon and Washington will be tough, and having USC and UCLA here will be great for our home fans. They're both going to be really good, so I think we'll have the toughest conference in women's basketball."

## Mitchell Injured In Final Game

Former Ohio State guard Kelsey Mitchell had a disappointing end to her playoff run. She was injured in the Indiana Fever's season-ending 107-98 overtime loss to the Las Vegas Aces on Sept. 30. She went down late in the third quarter of the game, and a stretcher was sent out on the court, even though Mitchell didn't end up using it. Mitchell posted on her Twitter account the next day that she was suffering from rhabdomyolysis.

"I suffered from something called Rhabdomyolysis last night," Mitchell wrote. "My muscles stopped producing and reached their maximum capacity. I went into a sense of numbness/paralyzing feeling with no movement from my lower extremities for up to five to seven seconds. I panicked because I began to think the worst when I felt like I couldn't move my legs. It was an out-of-body experience for me, and I thank God for covering me at a time like that."

As scary as the injury was, Mitchell said her health had improved in the days following the game.

"My body locked up from a physical standpoint, and from there fatigue and cramping settled in," she wrote. "Today, I am walking and moving at a slow pace, but I will be fine very soon."

Although there isn't ever a good time for a player to be injured, it's hard to imagine a worse moment for Mitchell to go down.

When Mitchell left the game, the Fever were trailing 59-55 midway through the third quarter. Mitchell was off to a hot start before the injury. She scored 15 points while shooting 4 of 8 from the field, including 3 of 3 from three-point range.

The Fever kept battling without their best player. Trailing by as many as nine points in the fourth quarter, Indiana came back to send the game to overtime. In overtime, the Aces made their first three three-point attempts to jump out to a five-point lead.

The Fever never retook the lead and ended the game missing their final three shots to lose by nine.

Mitchell, who was selected to the Associated Press' All-WNBA team after a regular season in which she averaged over 20 points per game (20.2) for the first time in her career, continued her stellar play in the playoffs.

She averaged 22.3 points, 3.0 assists and 1.5 rebounds per game in the postseason.



Jaloní Cambridge



Elsa Lemmilä

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# Trio Of Jakes Featured On Ice For Buckeyes

With three Jakes on the Ohio State hockey team, it could get confusing when coach Steve Rohlik calls out to one of them. But hockey being the way it is, simplistic nicknames often do the trick.

"I don't think I call any of them Jake," Rohlik said.

## IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

"Coach calls me Jakey most of the time," senior forward Jake Dunlap said. He joins sophomore forward Jake Rozzi and freshman forward Jake Karabela. "He calls Karabela Cabs or Cabbie and the other one is just Roz."

The trio agreed they had never been on a team with so many Jakes. By the way, there are also three players named Sam (Deckhut, Hillebrandt and McGinley).

Rozzi is also part of another group of three. He, sophomore forward Félix Caron and freshman goalie Dawson Labre are from the province of Quebec.

"That's awesome," Rozzi said. "I mean, they both live probably within 30 minutes from me, so I played against them growing up. It's good to have people from my hometown here, and then they speak French too if I need to get away and say something."

"Their first language actually is French, mine isn't, so they're a little bit better than me, but I try and keep up."

Dunlap is in his third season with the Buckeyes after a freshman year at New Hampshire. The past two seasons were spent with his older brother, Joe, who is playing for Laval, the American Hockey League affiliate of the Montreal Canadiens.

"It's been something with Joe being here five years with an incredible run and then Jake coming over and now Joe being gone," Rohlik said. "It's ironic how that's worked out. I'm obviously happy to have at least one more year with the family here."

The Dunlap brothers lived in the same house last season, so it's been an adjustment.

"It's definitely a lot different, just having someone to talk to after games and practices," Jake Dunlap said. "I know he's honest with me all the time. Trying to get true feedback from people is hard, and Joe is good at delivering that. It definitely hurts not having him around, but it also allows me to come into my own person and show why I deserve to be here."

"I'm keeping the legacy going. Joe obviously had a great career here, successful seasons with Ohio State. I'm trying to carry that on and do our last name proud."

Dunlap played in half of the 40 games last season and had four assists.

"My goal is just finding ways to stick in the lineup and be an every-week contributor, whether that's PK (penalty kill), forecheck, power play, whatever the coaching staff needs me to do," he said. "I'm here to do whatever is going to help us win games. It's what I want to do."

### New Setting

Karabela took advantage of the new NCAA rule that made players from Canada's top junior

leagues eligible at American schools. He played for Guelph in the Ontario Hockey League.

He wanted to go to a Big Ten school and quickly focused on Ohio State last fall. The Buckeyes reaching the Big Ten title game and making the NCAA tournament reaffirmed his decision.

"It got me excited to come down here and do that, and hopefully we can repeat what they did last year and get a little bit further," he said.

Karabela hails from Guelph, a city of about 145,000 in southwest Ontario. He found coming to Columbus and the OSU campus enlightening.

"We have a university too (Guelph University), but it's nothing like the typical United States college and college experience here," he said. "I love it here. It's been awesome. Lots of people. The guys on the team have all been terrific showing me around."

Hustle is his hallmark. He had 171 points (66 goals, 105 assists) in 249 regular-season games in four seasons with Guelph.

"I like to play the game fast. I like to use my speed, use my skating to create time and space and chances for my teammates," he said. "I can play anywhere. I'm good at the face-off dot as a center, but I can also play the wing and win puck battles. For me, it's playing 200 feet, winning puck battles on the boards and using my speed to my advantage."

### In The Clutch

While Karabela hopes to make an impact as a freshman, Rozzi used his freshman season to establish that he is dependable in key situations. Of his five goals in 33 games, the first three were game-winners. He also scored in two of the three Big Ten quarterfinal games against Wisconsin to advance to the semifinal and had an assist in the NCAA tournament vs. Boston University.

"He's always been like that. I think that's his track record," Rohlik said. "He's been a points guy, and we're going to need him and everybody else to step up and maybe contribute even a little bit more."

"I don't need him to step in and feel like he's got to put up 40 points, but it would be nice to score a few more of those game-winners. But it doesn't always have to be points. That's the one thing that we're trying to mention to Jake and other guys – we need you to be an all-around player, not just show success by thinking that you've got to score."

Rohlik stresses that good defense leads to scoring opportunities.

"We talk about it a lot, and our coaches have put some video up," Rohlik said. "You talk about it, but when you show it on video, it's like, 'Oh, see what happened. You're good five-man connected. You shut it down. You went down and had a great scoring chance.' The tape doesn't lie."

Rozzi, who had seven assists last season, won a championship with Youngstown of the United States Hockey League and was part of a team that won the prestigious Quebec International Pee Wee Tournament in 2016.

"I feel like the bigger the game, the bigger the opportunity," he said. "If we're playing a good team, that makes me even more fired up to play, and I hope that in big moments I can play my best."

Looking back on his freshman season, Rozzi wishes he had approached it differently.

"Maybe start the year off stronger," he said. "Coming to college hockey, you thought it was a bigger jump than it actually was. So, if I could have gone back and changed anything, I would just keep the same mentality that I had coming into juniors and just keep my confidence."

### Brush With Greatness

Karabela was drafted by the Washington Capitals in the fifth round (No. 149) in the 2022 NHL draft.

"I was at home. We were deciding whether or not to go because the draft was in Montreal," he said. "I just figured I wanted to be around my friends and family, so we had friends come over to the house and we were watching the draft."

"I was actually playing basketball outside with a couple of my buddies, just shooting hoops, trying to get my mind off it, just trying to stay away. When it went on the screen on the TV, my dad and his buddies came running out of the house, came up to me and said congratulations. I had no clue what was going on. It was awesome."

One of the perks of being drafted was a chance to attend the Capitals' development camps for prospects.

"One thing that stands out for me is a couple of years back was seeing (Alex) Ovechkin," Karabela said. "I think the presence that he had just walking around the hallways and stuff like that was pretty surreal."

He admitted being awestruck meeting Ovechkin, who last season broke Wayne Gretz-

ky's NHL goal record and entered this season with 897. Karabela managed to squeeze out a few words.

"It was kind of one of those shy little, 'How are you?' as he is walking by," he said. "That's a moment I'll never forget."

### Northern Exposure

The No. 16 Buckeyes opened the season by sweeping nonconference foe Northern Michigan 5-2 and 3-1 at Value City Arena on Oct. 10 and 11 behind the five-point series from Caron and Kristoffer Eberly stopping a combined 33 of 36 shots.

Caron, who transferred from RPI, scored the second and third goals and had two assists in the first game when the Buckeyes jumped to a 3-0 lead in the first period.

The Wildcats (0-4-0) pulled to within 3-2 before Davis Burnside late in the second and Riley Thompson early in the third put the game out of reach.

Caron scored a 180-foot empty-net goal to ice the second game. Nathan Lewis and Minnesota State transfer Adam Eisele made it 2-0 in the first before the Wildcats countered in the second period.

The Buckeyes play at Connecticut on Oct. 17 (7 p.m.) and 18 (4 p.m.). Both are on ESPN+ before hosting Sacred Heart on Oct. 24 and 25.

*For a full recap of the Northern Michigan series go to the [BuckeyeSports.com](http://BuckeyeSports.com) website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.*



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# Day Has Earned Right To Do Things His Way

There is a temptation to think that the longer Ohio State decides to be vanilla on offense and not unleash the hounds, the better the chance the Buckeyes could get upset on a day when things are really going badly.

## THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

But maybe not.

The Buckeyes were their usual effective but boring selves on offense in their win over Illinois, deciding not to throw deep against a team that had allowed 302 passing yards to Purdue a week earlier and came into the game ranked 18th in the Big Ten in pass defense. Ryan Day has said repeatedly that he will put more on the plate of first-year starting quarterback Julian Sayin, yet that appears to be lip service. Don't make the mistake of thinking that OSU went wild against Minnesota because it didn't. The Buckeyes were merely effective throwing the ball, but did so just 28 times, just one more throw than they attempted against the Illini.

Sayin was entrusted to check down and throw safe passes to the boundary and over the middle, and that worked. But there is no flash, no pizzazz to this Buckeyes offense. Could it be that Day doesn't have trust in the offense under first-year play caller Brian Hartline? Ohio State averaged 4.2 yards per play and was content to play bully ball against the Illini, and it's fine for what it was.

But when you have Ferraris in your fleet, you don't run a Volkswagen offense.

Maybe, just maybe, Day is content to have his defense be a sledgehammer and knock opponents into submission with might and strength and discipline and sound tackling. He knows this is the most potent stop unit in college football, and when you have that on your side, you can have an offense that is more "what?" than "wow!" and still win football games.

By rallying the troops and leading his team to the national championship last season under an onslaught of offensive fireworks, Day has shown that maybe he knows a little bit about this coaching thing. So he gets the benefit of the doubt regarding the offense.

"We got physical on offense and had

some long drives and scored some points in the red zone," Day said immediately after the game. "We found a little something today, but there is always room to get better."

It says something about the program when an 18-point victory feels like a slog, and Day gets credit for that, too. The expectation has grown to where fans are expecting not only blowouts, but video-game numbers. Ohio State averaged just 2.9 yards per carry against Illinois and had struggles in the red zone, but time and time again, the defense was there to beat back the enemy. Sure, it finally gave up its first red-zone touchdown of the season in the third quarter, but that ended up being a blip on the radar in a convincing win over an Illini squad that, while not ready for greatness, is tough and lives for these phone-booth contests. Besides, you knew that zero was not going to last forever.

While all of the other blue-blood programs have had stretches of mediocrity, Ohio State has been immune. Save for a 6-7 campaign under Luke Fickell in 2011, which came about due to the ouster of Jim Tressel, the Buckeyes have been among the premier programs in college football. How good has Ohio State been? It has finished outside of the Associated Press top 10 just once in the last decade-plus (12th in Urban Meyer's second season as head coach in 2013). There have been just three other seasons outside the top five, so Ohio State has been about as bulletproof as a program can be in this day and age of NIL and transfers. The victory over Illinois gives Ohio State its fourth 10-game winning streak in Day's six years plus tenure.

It was mentioned during the FOX broadcast that it isn't a stretch to say that Day's Buckeyes are the standard in college football right now. There won't be much pushback here. He is 76-10, a winning clip of 88.4 percent – the best in college football history.

Ohio State lost 14 draft picks from last year's team, and yet somehow, some way, Day has his Buckeyes unbeaten and at the top of the polls once again. If they continue to play defense at this level, you have to wonder if anyone can keep up.

Still, about that offense ...

### A Method To The Madness

With one exception, Day has hit on every quarterback he has worked with or brought into the Ohio State program.

There is a certain demeanor a guy has to have to catch Day's eye, and he also has to have the goods on the field. They are not

all alike in personality – just check out C.J. Stroud and Will Howard for evidence of that. You could not find two more different personalities, yet both led Ohio State to success.

Julian Sayin is cut from a different kind of cloth. He's quiet, but it's a cool, calm quiet. He knows what is expected of him, and it is a challenge that he embraces and works at every single day.

"You're seeing Julian grow each week, and his teammates believe in him more and more," Day said. "He understands what he's surrounded by and knows what we need to do to win the game. If he can continue to do that, we're going to have a chance to reach our goals this season. Having a strong running game, having a good defense and not being put in a position to where he has to come from behind early in his career is good. He's growing every day, and we have to keep giving him more to handle."

As for Day's process in selecting a quarterback, there is a lot that goes into it. The buzzword these days in scouting is "traits," things that are good predictors of success at the next level. Among them are size, arm strength and processing skill. But you also have to be accurate and a good decision maker.

There is no one size fits all, which is why it doesn't always work out.

"It's not a science," Day said. "If it was, then these NFL teams and college teams would have it down, would have an AI app that figures out who the best quarterback is. But it doesn't work that way. There are so many intangibles in place, and the more you're around it the more you see certain traits in guys that are aligned. When you work with them, you get a chance to see how they respond to different situations. There's a lot that goes into being a quarterback. There's an intellectual level that has to be at a certain point, there's a spatial intelligence, an emotional intelligence in dealing with players. There's processing of information. And then there's the physical traits."

"Over time you start to see similarities. And sometimes you're wrong. You have to find the person who is right for this school, this program. That's not always an easy thing. I've said before, Ohio State isn't for everybody. Julian has always felt he wanted to play at a place like Ohio State. He saw himself in that light. That's part of the process of quarterback play. They see what they want and they're driven, and you can't tell them anything else. This is what they're going to do. It's not up for discussion, despite setbacks that are going to come along in the process."

While on the subject of quarterback play, Day recalled how well Howard was able to get into every detail of the playbook during his one season in Columbus. That went a long way toward Day and the staff having trust in him to run the offense.

"It's about competency," he explained. "Do the guys around him trust him? Some of it is character, who you are, your connection with people. But the other part is competency. Do you know what you're doing? We're making sure that no one knows the offense better than the quarterback. Some

of those play calls are like paragraphs, so by the time we get done with that break, he gets a round of applause, a pat on the back. I don't know if I could remember it. I'm reading it off the script and he's hearing it in his ear and rips it off. Will had that. He would just rip it off, like 15 words. When he broke, the guys would be like, 'Great job, Will' because that was not easy."

### Big Win For BG

We are featuring Eddie George's 1995 run to the Heisman Trophy this season, and you will find stories about that quest in all of the issues that come out during the football season. As most know by now, George is in his first season as head coach at Bowling Green, and his Falcons came back from a 21-0 deficit against rival Toledo to win 28-21 on Oct. 11. BG had been 0-75 all-time in games where it trailed by 21 points or more, so this was big not only for that reason, but because it was a win in the Battle of I-75.

As someone who experienced firsthand the greatest rivalry in college sports, it should not be surprising that he was able to get his players fired up enough to battle back from adversity and take down a hated foe. He has the Falcons at 3-3 in what is supposed to be a rebuilding year, and it has been a bit up and down.

BG battled with Cincinnati before losing by two touchdowns and fell 35-20 to the same Ohio squad that the Buckeyes defeated 37-9 in Ohio Stadium earlier this season.

### The Big Reveal

Those who know me understand that I am nothing if not principled. Rankings for college football should not come out until the beginning/middle of October, when most teams have a full four or five games under their belts. Sure, preseason rankings are fine if they are a forecast of how the season is predicted to play out. But as a measuring stick of where teams are now? Irrelevant.

Rankings should be about what you have done on the field, with a little bit of team strength thrown in for good measure. This is how my rankings are compiled, and while this may not be as exciting as the trailer for The Golden Bachelor or Survivor, there is a faction that lives and dies with these rankings.

### Dandy Dozen

1. Indiana (6-0)
2. Ohio State (6-0)
3. Miami (5-0)
4. Texas A&M (6-0)
5. Texas Tech (6-0)
6. Alabama (5-1)
7. Georgia (5-1)
8. Ole Miss (6-0)
9. LSU (5-1)
10. BYU (6-0)
11. Oregon (5-1)
12. Georgia Tech (6-0)



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# No Rushing To Judgment On OSU Running Game

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

While the Ohio State football team may not have looked as crisp as it has in other games this season, the road win against a ranked Illinois team was still an important victory for the Buckeyes. Personally, I think Illinois was a little over-rated. You can't pretend that their 63-10 loss to Indiana didn't happen. On the other hand, some seemed to be making a big deal over the Illini's 43-27 win over Purdue. The gaffes I saw by the Illini against Ohio State made me believe they are not a conference contender.

But any conference road win is a good win. In this space in the last issue, I asked if the Buckeyes were getting better each week. In this case I am not sure they got better, but I certainly don't think they got worse, and they justifiably remain the top team in the country. No team – high school, college or pro – is on top of its game every week, yet the Buckeyes still came away with a relatively easy 34-16 victory in a hostile environment.

In his column elsewhere in this issue, managing editor emeritus Mark Rea asks each of us to be honest.

"At any time during top-ranked Ohio State's 34-16 road win against No. 17 Illinois on Oct. 11, were you the least bit worried about the outcome?"

In my case, I'll be honest. "No."

The numbers may not have been as impressive as they were in previous games – the season-high 16 points given up for instance – but the Ohio State defense is still top-notch. While they gave up the two touchdowns (one in garbage time) and a field goal, they also forced three turnovers. The Buckeyes yielded only 47 yards on the ground, and it took QB Luke Altmyer 44 passing attempts to amass his 248 yards through the air.

I would classify the performance of the offense as more workmanlike than sensational, as it has been in some previous games. More like vs. Texas than against Minnesota. The same for quarterback Julian Sayin, who was a modest (for him) 19 of 27 for 166 yards and two scores. But he did not throw an interception, nor was he sacked. He has not thrown a pick since he had two against Ohio in game three, and he has been sacked only once since that game with the Bobcats.

If I have any area of concern with the offense, it would be with the running game. Against Illinois, Ohio State gained just 106 yards on 37 carries for a 2.9-yard average. This on the heels of only 133 yards against Minnesota the week before, with a more productive – but hardly overpowering – 4.4 yard average.

Discounting the 274 yards rushing Ohio State racked up against lowly Grambling, the Buckeyes' most productive game on the ground this season was the 225 against OU in game three. The team is currently 63rd in the country, averaging 160.7 yards rushing a contest, right in the middle nationally. The number is not horrible but far less than most of the stats the rest of the team has been registering.

Bo Jackson, who carried 10 times for 47 yards against the Illini, is doing fine but looks like a player who is adjusting to being the starter and playing against the other team's best, rather than dazzling in mop-up time. Like most, I think it was the right move to put him on the first team.

I thought CJ Donaldson had one of his better games with his 13 carries for 44 yards. His yards-per-carry average, 3.4 in this case, is sometimes misleading as frequently he comes in for short-yardage situations. It's hard to rip off a 10-yarder when you are given the ball at the 2.

The pecking order seems to have been set with Jackson followed by Donaldson. Does anyone besides me wonder why coach Ryan Day and OC Brian Hartline kept sending James Peoples in? I thought it just disrupted the flow of the ro-

tation.

One thing I like about both Jackson and Donaldson is that they don't take a lot of negative yardage. They have 58 carries each, and they have only five negative yards between them. They are averaging 5.6 yards a carry.

Day seems to be looking for longer runs from his backs.

"We want to be four more in every run outside of the 10-yard line," he said after the Illinois game. "We needed to go and look to see: Is it a blocking issue? Is there a personnel issue? Are we blocking and then just getting what we blocked for?"

"We were moving the line of scrimmage. There were some blocks that we lost across the board, and then we've got to figure out making sure that the runs are hitting exactly right, because some did, but others, I thought maybe there was more there, and we needed to figure out why that is."

Fortunately for Ohio State, it has enough on defense and in the passing game to make up for any shortcomings on the ground. But the potential seems there on the ground to make the Buckeyes an even more complete team.

Special teams? That might be another story.

In the win over the Illini, I wasn't especially impressed with Joe McGuire. He averaged 37.8 yards on his four kicks, with just one inside the 20. His long of 41 went for a touchback, giving him a net of 21 yards. Ohio State is 66th in the country in net punting at 39.6.

A famous coach once said that the punt is the most important play in football. This is another area where the Buckeyes could show some improvement.

Nick McLarty, anyone?

### A Couple Of Quickies

- After a strong (i.e. disciplined) start to the season, I worry that Davison Igbinosun is reverting to his old ways. They don't play much tighter pass defense than Igbinosun. But I would hate to have the season come down to a pass-interference penalty. Are oven mitts legal game equipment?

- I still wish the Buckeyes would get off to a faster start. Against the Illini the Buckeyes marched 67 yards on 12 plays on their opening drive but had to settle for a field goal. Ohio State's problems in the red zone are real. Time to fix that.

- On the other side of the ball, however, the play in the red zone by the OSU defense is nothing short of amazing. Even though their streak of success near the goal line was broken by Illinois, the Buckeyes made the Illini work for everything they got from under the shadow of the goalposts.

- The quote of the game goes to Donaldson. Talking about running behind Ohio State's offensive line he said this: "They just move the line of scrimmage. All I've got to do is run the ball behind The Great Wall of Ohio."

### Illini Sports Bulletin?

In the past couple of weeks, we have had quite a few stories in BSB about Illinois football, primarily negative if you are an Ohio State fan. Last issue we ran a story about OSU's struggles against the Illini in the early John Cooper years. For our Reprint Thursday feature at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com on Oct. 9, we reprinted stories from the game in 1992 when freshman Eddie George, the future Heisman Trophy winner, fumbled twice at the goal line, resulting in two Illinois touchdowns in an 18-16 win for the

Illini.

In this issue of BSB, we have stories on one of the biggest upsets for the Illini in the series, when, led by Juice Williams in 2007, they almost knocked Ohio State out of the running for the BCS national championship game with a stunning 28-21 upset in Ohio Stadium.

In this issue we also mark the 45th anniversary of Illinois quarterback Dave Wilson passing for a record 621 yards against Ohio State in 1980. The Buckeyes actually won that game – in my mind I recalled it as a loss – but it wasn't a high-water mark in Ohio State football history, regardless. It also wasn't a high-water mark in the career of legendary coach Nick Saban, who coached OSU's defensive backs that season.

That Ohio State defeated wild-throwing Wilson and the Illini in 1980 is not the only thing that I had forgotten over the decades. I also forgot that in addition to losing the two critical fumbles against Illinois, George also scored a touchdown in that same game, giving him five on the early season.

George had become the darling of Buckeye fans with his knack for scoring from the goal-line package. In fact, in a loss to Wisconsin the week before George's nightmare game, Cooper came under heavy fire for using his leading rusher, Raymont Harris, instead of George on a critical two-point conversion attempt.

"Led by an offensive line averaging nearly 6-5 and 290 pounds, OSU lined up in formation using its now familiar full house backfield, utilizing the blocking talents of fullbacks Jeff Cothran and William Houston," then BSB editor Rea wrote in the Oct. 10, 1992, issue of BSB. "However, instead of freshman Eddie George – who had scored three touchdowns out of similar formations against Syracuse two weeks before – the Buckeyes installed Raymont Harris at the tailback slot.

"As it turned out, it wouldn't have mattered if O.J. Simpson, Jim Brown or Walter Payton had been the tailback.

"Wisconsin used a seven-man front and so clogged the middle of the line that Harris had to try to leap over the pack. In the middle of that leap, at about the 1-yard line, he was met by Badger linebacker Gary Casper, and the OSU tailback went no further."

The Badgers would hold on for a 20-16 victory, handing Ohio State its first loss in what would ultimately become an 8-3-1 season. The tie came against Michigan in a game OSU president E. Gordon Gee would famously dub "one of our greatest wins ever."

All this recent reporting about Illinois in BSB is an indicator of how quirky the series between the two schools has been through the years (think 1984 and Keith Byars).

Good news, Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers. I think we are done reporting on the Illini – at least until the two teams meet again.

### He Could Have Said It Today

Here's another "From the Pages of BSB" note that would sound relevant today, even though it was spoken by a Buckeye great 40 years ago following a win over Indiana.

"Ohio State linebacker Pepper Johnson was not convinced that the unbeaten Indiana Hoosiers had been going up against foes quite as strong as the Buckeyes," the note found on page 29 of this issue reads.

" 'Indiana came into the game averaging about 500 yards a game,' Johnson said. 'But we

looked at Indiana as having to get 500 yards against us. They were playing other teams. They were not playing Ohio State.'

"Johnson and his mates did a number on the Hoosiers, allowing Indiana 302 total yards, 48 of those in the final minute against the Buckeye reserves in the 48-7 victory.

" 'We played with a little more enthusiasm today than we did the last couple of weeks, and it made a big difference,' said Johnson, who had nine tackles in the game. 'We were challenging those guys as much as possible. We disguised the blitzes. Me and Chris (Spielman) acted like we were coming, and then we'd send Byron (Lee) and (Eric) Kumerow around the outside.' "

Sounds like Matt Patricia's defense.

The current Hoosiers still have to prove they can move the ball against the Buckeyes, though they earned more cachet after their 30-20 win over No. 3 Oregon on Nov. 11, at Autzen Stadium, no less.

The Hoosiers came into Ohio Stadium undefeated at 10-0 last year but were downed by the Buckeyes, 38-15. As for Johnson's boast about the 1985 Buckeye defense, the 2024 IU team, frequently accused of benefiting from a weak schedule, gained just 151 yards against the Buckeyes on 83 yards rushing and just 68 yards rushing.

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