



Taking Care Of Business

SONNY BROCKWAY

AIR KING — Julian Sayin stepped into the starting role this season and looks comfortable in leading Ohio State to an undefeated season. He threw for a career-high 393 yards in the 34-0 win over Wisconsin on Oct. 18.

**Your Mailing Label Goes Here
Call (614) 486-2202
Today To Subscribe**

OSU Shuts Out Wisconsin, 34-0, In Camp Randall

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

With 10 minutes to go in the fourth quarter of No. 1 Ohio State's 34-0 win over Wisconsin, the CBS broadcast showed a graphic of all of the FBS head coaches who have been fired in-season this year.

The broadcasters noted that Badgers head coach Luke Fickell might soon be added to that list, and they could very well be correct with how the season has gone for the former Buckeye coach.

Ohio State was in control of the game the entire afternoon against the Badgers, even with reserves starting to get consistent time in the contest by the middle of the second quarter.

But it seemed that before the game, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day and Co. had already decided that, no matter what the game looked like, it was going to be the Julian Sayin show.

Sayin finished the game with 42 passes, the most of his young career, and completed 36 of them (85.7 percent), continuing the impressive completion percentage he had put up through six games already.

Those 36 completions were enough to go for 393 yards, which is a career high, and four touchdowns, tying the career high he set against Grambling State on Sept. 6 this year. Junior wide receiver Carnell Tate caught two of those scores, his fifth and sixth of the season.

"He's the truth. He's the Heisman winner. No questions, ifs, ands or doubts," said Tate when asked what he would tell the Heisman voters about Sayin. "Each and every week, he goes out there and proves to us why he's the Heisman winner."

Day was impressed with what he saw from the redshirt-freshman quarterback.

"I thought Julian made some really good decisions in the RPO game," the coach said. "I thought he checked the ball down for the most part when we needed to, and those off-schedule plays were excellent. He found his checkdowns at times, and his scramble plays, like the one to Brandon (Inniss), was really well done. He found a few other ones as well."

Sayin believes that the discrepancy between the number of pass plays vs. rush plays the Buckeyes ran in the game was simply due to the fact that OSU felt that's where it had an advantage.

"I think it's what the game called for," he said. "They were very stout in the box, and we saw the ability to take advantage

of plays outside with the RPO game. I think the receivers did a good job of spacing it out and catching, and they made some great plays, making guys miss after."

Day and offensive coordinator Brian Hartline have been very public with how they have tried to ease Sayin into the season since he is starting for the first time. They have been able to do that because of how well the defense has played this year, picking up its second shutout of the season and its second shutout against a Big Ten team in the last two seasons.

The unit is allowing just 5.9 points per game through seven games, which is first in the country, and it has made Sayin's job much easier.

But the way that Sayin has played throughout the season, it's not clear that it was necessary for the Buckeyes to move as slowly as they have with him. Day said as much after the Texas game.

His biggest mistakes of the season came against Grambling and Ohio when he threw three interceptions in two games on what can only be characterized as freshman mistakes. But he has shown that he learns from those mistakes and does not make them again, at least so far.

But week after week, more of the playbook seems to have opened up for Sayin, and he has been just as impressive each time his game expands.

Someone who has watched every single snap of this Ohio State season has watched the slow progression and might not notice much of a difference in the quarterback from game to game. But someone who watched the Buckeyes play against Texas and hadn't watched the Scarlet and Gray again until the game against the Badgers is seeing what seems to be an already polished version of the quarterback, who is now finding himself in the Heisman race, where many college football fans expected to see star wide receiver Jeremiah Smith over Sayin.

"I'm impressed with his preparation," Day said. "I sit in those meetings with (quarterbacks coach Billy Fessler), (Sayin) and Lincoln (Kienholz). The amount of information that he is processing and those guys go through in those meetings is well done. When you see it translate to the field, that's winning football."

Sayin isn't listening to the noise and is instead continuing to work at his craft to try to get better.

"I'm just playing one game at a time

Continued On Page 10

Buckeye Leaves

Ohio State had impressive performances on both sides of the ball in its 34-0 win over Wisconsin at Camp Randall Stadium on Oct. 18. 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: I'm giving my Buckeye Leaf to wide receiver Carnell Tate for his eye-popping offensive performance in Ohio State's win over Wisconsin.

Tate finished his day with six catches for 111 yards and two touchdowns. In the first quarter alone, quarterback Julian Sayin found the junior four times for 85 yards and two scores.

Tate's two touchdown receptions of 33 and 10 yards allowed Ohio State to jump out to an early 17-point lead over the Badgers. The Chicago native caught six of his seven targets in the game.

Bobby Gorbett, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf is going to sophomore linebacker Arvell Reese. As he's done all season, Reese flew around the field and routinely made plays for Ohio State's defense in the Buckeyes' win over Wisconsin. He finished the game with four total tackles, a sack and two tackles for loss.

Reese helped lead Ohio State to its second

shutout of the season and helped limit the Badgers to just 144 total yards.

Reese made his presence felt early in the game, as all four of his tackles came in the first half. Reese's sack came early in the second quarter on a first-down play when the Buckeyes' lead was 17-0. He was spying Wisconsin quarterback Hunter Simmons on the play and waited until he had a free lane to surge toward the Badgers' signal caller and bring him down 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage.

Greg Wilson, BSB: Redshirt freshman quarterback Julian Sayin has earned a lot of praise this season for having "poise in the noise." While there wasn't much noise in Camp Randall Stadium for this game, Sayin was still certainly poised.

He led the country in completion percentage after six games and improved on that number with the most pass attempts he has thrown in a single game in his young career.

He finished the contest 36 of 42 passing (85.7 percent) for 393 yards and four touchdowns, also showing that he is able to tuck and run when necessary, keeping the ball for 8 yards on an option in the third quarter.

BSB Subscribers:

Bob Cody: Buckeye Leaves on offense for Julian Sayin, Carnell Tate, Jeremiah Smith, Max Klare, Quincy Porter, Isaiah West, Will Kacmarek and

Brandon Inniss.

Buckeye Leaves on defense earned by Sonny Styles. Jaylen McClain, Tywone Malone, Arvell Reese, Kayden McDonald, Caden Curry and Aaron Scott.

Special leaf for Carson Hinzman, who made the right decision leaving his home state, Wisconsin, to play for OSU!

BuckeyeScott: When The Silver Bullets get a shutout, everyone on the defense gets a Buckeye Leaf!

Tiffin Buckeye: Carnell Tate, Brandon Inniss, the whole defense.

PeyoteBuck: This is a team that functions as a team. Give everyone a leaf.

John Lanning: Very methodical execution in honing the necessary skills. My leaves to the following:

1. Carnell Tate. That first TD was outstanding by leaping above double coverage to make that catch.
2. I don't know how to separate the defense. They play as a unit to control the game. Leaves all around.
3. Each week, I see Sayin getting better, but his accuracy has been exceptional. Is it great receivers or a great QB that moves the offense? Either way, 85.7 percent completion earns a leaf.



From The Message Board

"I would say hiring Phil Longo and trying to run air raid when you clearly didn't have the personnel to run such an offense. That set him back, and then he had to pivot and switch back, but by that time it was already too late."

— Tiffin Buckeye

"Yes, I was rooting for Luke to succeed at Wisconsin because he is a great representative of the Buckeye program.

"I see three reasons for his downfall: 1. His decision to abandon the Barry Alvarez offensive style/culture. 2. The terrible luck with injuries, especially at quarterback. 3. This season's meat-grinder schedule with games against Alabama, Michigan, Iowa, Ohio State, Oregon, Indiana, Illinois and Minnesota.

"In today's NIL and transfer portal environment, what Indiana has done is remarkable. Many schools are trying it, but not many will have that level of success. I'm

not sure Wisconsin will make that commitment."

— BYRON MCNUTT

"Luke is a good guy, and I always wish him well. What went wrong with him? He left Cincinnati."

— PeyoteBuck

"I don't root against individuals or teams, unless of course they are playing the Buckeyes! College football is like a business. If you don't do the fundamentals correctly, you will not succeed. When it comes to college football, you need to invest in the players and coaches. Wisconsin has not done a good job in managing the portal nor in providing sufficient funds for its NIL programs. You get what you pay for."

— BuckeyeScott

"I like Luke and think he's a competent coach, but as John Cooper once said, 'There are more good coaches than good programs,'

After Ohio State's 34-0 win over head coach Luke Fickell and Wisconsin, the Badgers are on track to miss a bowl game for the second straight season, and Fickell seems to be on the hot seat in his third season with the program. We asked our subscribers on the BSB Fan Forum where they believe Fickell went wrong in Wisconsin and if they were rooting for the former Buckeye in Madison.

and he went on to cite Blanton Collier and Chuck Knox and others on the same staff at Kentucky, and they got fired. Luke will get another HC job. Agree with the notion that Wisconsin is probably not up to date in the NIL/transfer portal world.

— Terrier Buck

"Wisconsin has had horrible luck with injuries. I think they're playing both third-string QB and RBs. Both QBs, Billy Edwards and Danny O'Neil, were transfers in. As an Arizona Cardinals fan, I can relate, as it seems every year QB Kyler Murray and RB James Conner get injured. It's hard to build a team when the top players aren't available. Their defense fought hard all game long. Fickell has proved he can coach."

— R1TBDBITL

"I was surprised that Fickell went away from the power football that Wisconsin was known for. He should have kept that and added his idea

of a strong passing game. With his switch to the air attack, he never got a quarterback to drive the offense. His linemen recruiting was not strong. It may have been good for Cincinnati, but not the BIG. Then he lost DC Jim Leonhard, who really wanted the head coach position and announced he would leave the program after the '22 season. Not a good situation. Then look at the schedules over the past two years. Tough, tough runs. The AD says Luke will be back for 2026. The '26 schedule is very manageable. I think he's a good coach. I'm hoping he can turn the ship around."

— John Lanning

"I never thought Wisconsin was a good fit for Luke. He tried, unsuccessfully, to fit a round peg in a square hole with a new offense. I was hoping for the best for him, but it wasn't meant to be."

— Bob Cody

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

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

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

PUBLISHER
Frank Moskowitz

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER
Becky Roberts

EDITOR
Greg Wilson

MANAGING EDITOR EMERITUS
Mark Rea

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER EMERITUS
Karen Wachsmen 1944-1999

PHOTOGRAPHY
Sonny Brockway Terry Gilliam
Kevin Dye Josh Winslow

CONTRIBUTORS
David Breithaupt Braden Moles
Samuel Cipriani Bob Roehm
Bill Conley Steve Siegfried
Rich Exner Jeff Svoboda
Bobby Gorbett Mike Wachsmen
Craig Merz

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES
Paula Serra Ron Friedman

2024-25 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (VOL. 45)

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

The next issue (Nov. 8 cover date) will be mailed on Nov. 4.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is a privately owned newspaper and is not affiliated directly or indirectly with The Ohio State University.

Wachsmen Elite Donor:



OPINION

Why No Heisman Love For Smith, Sayin?

I think most of us who claim to know anything at all with regard to talent would acknowledge Jeremiah Smith is the best player in college football this year. If Smith played quarterback at Ohio State rather than wide receiver, whoever is entrusted to engraving the winning name on the Heisman Trophy could get an early start.

But Smith does not play quarterback. Therefore, we are left with the next month and a half of relentless hype surrounding what used to be an award for the most outstanding college football player which has now devolved into trying to identify the best quarterback with the best statistics on the best team.

Much like rankings for teams, preseason talk surrounding Heisman favorites is typically a crapshoot. This year, it was mostly the first part of that word with Arch Manning of Texas and Cade Klubnik of Clemson bowing out of the race early and such fellow QBs as LaNorris Sellers of South Carolina, Garrett Nussmeier of LSU and Carson Beck of Miami (Fla.) quickly shuffling out of the discussion.

Of the handful of preseason favorites, only Smith remains in contention – albeit usually no higher than third or fourth choice.

Topping the most recent charts from oddsmakers are Ty Simpson of Alabama and Fernando Mendoza of Indiana with Marcel Reed of Texas A&M and Diego Pavia of Vanderbilt beginning to elbow their way into the spotlight.

Despite the fact Alabama hasn't won a full-season national championship since 2017, the Crimson Tide brand (thanks at least in part to the ESPN hype machine) still holds tremendous sway throughout the country. The team lost its season opener to a now four-loss Florida State team, a 31-17 defeat during which Simpson completed barely more than 50 percent of his passes.

Since then, the Tide has struggled at times but has still reeled off six straight victories with Simpson piling up 1,931 yards and 18 touchdowns against only one interception.

Mendoza, the Cal transfer who has guided Indiana to seven straight wins and a program-record No. 2 national ranking, has completed 73.5 percent of his attempts with a lofty quarterback rating of 191.0.

Reed has built upon a 360-yard performance during his team's Sept. 13 win against then eighth-ranked Notre Dame and has led the Aggies to their first 7-0 start since 1994. Meanwhile, Pavia has led the Commodores to their first 6-1 start in 75 years, and during his team's 31-24 takedown of No. 10 LSU, he had the temerity to strike the Heisman pose following a 21-yard touchdown run.

It is undeniable that each of those quarterbacks is having a superb season. With the exception of Reed, each has a completion percentage north of 70, each has thrown for at least 1,400 yards, and each has a QBR of at least 156.0, and with the exception of Pavia, each has his team among the top four in the national rankings.

Of course, there is one glaring omission from that list, and he just happens to be the guy quarterbacking the No. 1 team in the nation.

In terms of comparison, Julian Sayin has a completion percentage (80.0) that is head and shoulders above Pavia (71.4), Mendoza (73.5), Simpson (70.2) and Reed (61.9). The Ohio State quarterback and his 189.7 quarterback rating is just below Mendoza (191.0), and easily bests Simpson (170.9), Pavia (165.2) and Reed (156.0).

Of the group, only Mendoza (21) has more touchdown passes so far this season than Sayin's 19, only Simpson (1,931) has thrown for more yards than Sayin (1,872), and only Mendoza (9.7) has the edge over Sayin (9.6)

in terms of average yards per attempt – one of the most important stats where pro scouts are concerned.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

In addition to the raw numbers, Sayin also has the so-called intangibles that turn mere stars into elite quarterbacks. Every former-QB-turned-analyst from Gary Danielson and Todd Blackledge to Joel Klatt has gushed over Sayin's arm strength, accuracy and ability to throw a catchable ball.

Of course, it helps to have a talented group of receivers at one's disposal, but all anyone would ever need to determine Sayin's ability would be the first touchdown scored during the 34-0 win Oct. 18 at Wisconsin.

Faced with third-and-11 on his team's opening possession, Sayin took a shotgun snap, retreated, and shifted a couple of steps to his left to avoid the oncoming rush. From the 43-yard line, the sophomore QB planted his back foot and threaded a needle between two Wisconsin defenders, affording intended receiver Carnell Tate – and only Tate – a chance to catch the ball.

The fact that Tate made an acrobatic, leaping catch, hanging onto the ball as one of the defenders ripped off the receiver's helmet, only enhanced the play. From Sayin's hand to Tate's grasp, the pass traveled nearly 50 yards on a perfect arc and kicked off a 393-yard, four-touchdown afternoon for Sayin.

Put that play on rewind for Heisman voters, and then try to tell me there's a better quarterback in college football this year.

Defense On Historic Pace

It seems worth repeating each week just how dominant Ohio State's defense has been this season despite losing eight starters from last year's national championship team.

Everyone wants to talk about how tightfisted the Buckeyes have been in terms of scoring, and we'll get to that. But I have some other stats for you that scream for attention.

Ohio State has been relentless in getting the opposing offense off the field, ranking first in the nation in defensive third-down efficiency at 21.3 percent. But when the Buckeyes really clamp down is during the first half. None of the first seven opponents has converted more than one third-down situation during the opening 30 minutes, and the opposing seven are a collective 5 for 45 on third-down conversions. That is a borderline-unbelievable 11.1-percent efficiency rate.

Red-zone defense is another point of excellence. There is no defense in the nation better than Ohio State in the red zone as evidenced by their opponents scoring points on only 6 of 12 trips inside the zone. Of those six scoring drives, only two resulted in a touchdown.

The Buckeyes are second in the nation in total defense, allowing an average of 216.9 yards per game. That number shrank after Wisconsin managed only 144 total yards, the lowest total for a Big Ten opponent since Indiana had 128 during a 54-7 home loss to the Buckeyes in 2021.

Finally, in terms of scoring defense, Ohio State is on an historic pace in terms of stinginess.

The Buckeyes currently lead the nation in scoring defense allowing just 5.9 points per

game. Oklahoma is the only other team that has yielded less than double digits on average, and the Sooners are giving up 9.4 points per game.

The defense has already pitched two shutouts – no OSU defense has had three shutouts in a season since 2009 – and has allowed only 41 points, the fewest to the first seven opponents during a season since the 1973 unit gave up just 20 points over that span.

Again, a little deeper dive into those numbers reveals just how dominant the Buckeyes have been during the first half. In seven games so far this season, Matt Patricia's defense has allowed a scant 12 points during the first half – single field goals to Ohio, Washington, Minnesota and Illinois.

By way of comparison, the 1973 team allowed 13 points during the first half of its first seven games – a touchdown and PAT in the season opener to Minnesota and subsequent field goals to TCU and Washington State.

To find an Ohio State defense that allowed fewer than 12 first-half points to its first seven opponents, you have to go all the way back to 1933. That team, which allowed only 26 points in eight games all season, surrendered just six first-half points in its first seven games – a touchdown to Michigan during a 13-0 loss that was the only blemish on the 1933 schedule.

Some More Numbers

- With the win against Wisconsin, Ryan Day reached a coaching milestone with his 50th victory in conference play. Only 24 coaches in Big Ten history before him have totaled 50 league wins, and five of them coached at Ohio State – Woody Hayes (153), John Cooper (70), Jim Tressel (66), Earle Bruce (57) and Urban Meyer (54). Yes, I'm including the seven conference wins Tressel compiled in 2010.

- Wisconsin suffered shutout losses in back-to-back games for the first time in 48 years. The Badgers lost a 42-0 decision at third-ranked Ohio State on Oct. 29, 1977, and 22-0 at home to unranked Purdue the following week. Wisconsin hasn't been shut out three games in a row since 1968, a season that also marked the last time the Badgers finished with a winless conference record.

- This year's outcome marked the 263rd shutout victory for Ohio State in program history, including the 10th by a final score of 34-0. But to find the most recent 34-0 shutout engineered by the Buckeyes, you'll need to go back more than 80 years when Carroll Widdoes led Ohio State to a 34-0 win against Iowa on Oct. 7, 1944. Halfback Les Horvath, on his way to the Heisman Trophy that year, rushed for 118 yards and a touchdown against the Hawkeyes in that game.

- Sayin now has four games this season of at least 300 yards passing, tying him with J.T. Barrett (2014) and Justin Fields (2020) for the fifth most in a single season by an OSU quarterback. Dwayne Haskins (2018) and C.J. Stroud (2021) share the program record with nine.

- Sayin's total of 393 yards against Wisconsin established a new career high for the sophomore. It was also the highest total for an OSU quarterback since Stroud set the program record with 573 against Utah in the 2022 Rose Bowl.

- With 97 receiving yards, Smith now has 1,917 for his career, jumping him five spots to 16th on the program's all-time list. He passed Ken-Yon Rambo (1,849, 1997-2000), Brian Robiskie (1,866, 2005-08), Dane Sanzenbacher (1,879, 2007-10) and Joey Galloway (1,894, 1991-94). Smith needs only 17 more yards to move past Ted Ginn Jr. (1,943, 1904-06) and into the all-time top 15.



OSU Remains On Top Of AP Poll

With a dominant 34-0 win over Wisconsin on Oct. 18, Ohio State ranked No. 1 in the AP top 25 for the eighth straight week. In the entire top 25, OSU was the only team to hold its spot from the previous week.

The Buckeyes received 60 first-place votes after their win and are followed by Indiana at No. 2 with six first-place votes. No other team received any votes for the first-place spot after Miami (Fla.) fell to Louisville on Oct. 17.

The Hurricanes dropped seven spots to No. 9 after their loss, but that wasn't the biggest fall, as LSU fell from No. 10 to No. 20 after its loss to Vanderbilt, which took the Tigers' spot at No. 10.

No. 3 Texas A&M, No. 4 Alabama, No. 5 Georgia, No. 6 Oregon, No. 7 Georgia Tech and No. 8 Ole Miss rounded out the rest of the top 10.

Illinois and Michigan also represent the Big Ten conference in the rankings at No. 23 and No. 25, respectively. The Illini were off the week after getting beaten by Ohio State on Oct. 11. The Wolverines came off a 24-7 win over Washington in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Louisville joined the rankings as the No. 19 team, while Illinois, No. 24 Arizona State and Michigan also entered the top 25 after not being included the previous week.

Houston Returns, Styles Out At UW

After defensive tackle Eddrick Houston

and nickel back Lorenzo Styles Jr. were out with injuries in Ohio State's 34-16 victory over Illinois, the Buckeyes' starting group was fully available against Wisconsin.

Houston returned to the lineup for Ohio State, but Styles did not appear in the win.

With Styles out of the lineup, Ohio State once again moved junior cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. to nickel and inserted freshman cornerback Devin Sanchez out-side.

Houston finished his outing with one tackle.

In the game, junior wide receiver Brandon Inniss came up limping off the field twice but returned after both instances.

Also out for Ohio State were wide receivers Bryson Rodgers and Preston Wolfe, tight end Max LeBlanc, quarterback Mason Maggs, running back Anthony Rogers, safety Deshawn Stewart, and defensive linemen Logan George, Maxwell Roy and Ahmed Tounkara.

Hinzman Returns Home Against UW

Junior center Carson Hinzman returned to his home state for Ohio State's 34-0 win over Wisconsin on Oct. 18. Hinzman, a native of Spring Valley, Wis., first played in Camp Randall Stadium for the Buckeyes during their 24-10 win over the Badgers in 2023, as the team's center. Hinzman said during a media availability at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center on Oct. 17 that he's grown a lot since then.

"Two years ago, (I was) playing a lot more reactionary," Hinzman said. "I didn't really fully understand why things were going on or what was happening. I kind of had to rely a lot more on the guys around me, but now it's a different position where I get to kind of step into a little bit more of a leadership role and have a lot of the guys kind of rely on me and what I'm looking at and how I can see what's happening and kind of diagnose that. So it's the same position, but completely different feel for the game."

Hinzman went to the bench last year and backed up eventual Rimington Trophy winner Seth McLaughlin. So far through seven

2025 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Aug. 30	TEXAS	W, 14-7	FOX	5-2, 16-13 (OT) win over Kentucky
Sept. 6	GRAMBLING	W, 70-0	BTN	4-3, 20-16 win over Arkansas-Pine Bluff
Sept. 13	OHIO	W, 37-9	Peacock	4-3, 48-21 win over Northern Illinois
Sept. 27	at Washington	W, 24-6	CBS	5-2, 24-7 loss to Michigan
Oct. 4	MINNESOTA	W, 42-3	NBC	5-2, 24-6 win over Nebraska
Oct. 11	at Illinois	W 34-16	FOX	5-2, idle
Oct. 18	at Wisconsin	W, 34-0	CBS	2-5, 34-0 loss to Ohio State
Nov. 1	PENN STATE	TBA	TBA	3-4, 25-24 loss to Iowa
Nov. 8	at Purdue	TBA	TBA	2-5, 19-0 loss to Northwestern
Nov. 15	UCLA	TBA	TBA	3-4, 20-17 win over Maryland
Nov. 22	RUTGERS	TBA	TBA	3-4, 56-10 loss to Oregon
Nov. 29	at Michigan	Noon	FOX	5-2, 24-7 win over Washington

games, Hinzman has been a strong part of an offensive line that has allowed just three sacks all season.

Hinzman, who said he strongly considered committing to Wisconsin out of high school, indicated he was very excited about the chance to go back to Madison and play against the Badgers.

"I'm super pumped to go back and play over there," Hinzman said. "I think I'm 1-1 there (at Camp Randall Stadium) right now. In high school, we lost our state championship my freshman year, so I have to beat .500."

Jackson Says OSU Shut Down Illini Tempo

Following Ohio State's victory over Illinois, Illini head coach Bret Bielema said he wished they had approached the Buckeye defense differently.

Bielema said that Illinois' tempo attack gave Ohio State's defense trouble and that he felt if he had gone to the faster-paced attack earlier, it may have been a different game.

"I actually wanted to go tempo the whole freaking game, because they couldn't do s—t with it. It seemed like when we went tempo that things really began to work our way. We just needed to go to it sooner," he said.

However, the Buckeyes did not agree with that sentiment.

Senior defensive end Kenyatta Jackson Jr. refuted Bielema's statement that Illinois' tempo offense was effective against Ohio State.

"They did go tempo for a little bit, but I mean, it quickly got shut down," Jackson said. "So whatever he said, tempo was working, I don't know."

Jackson had a solid performance against the Illini, racking up two tackles, 1½ tackles for loss and a half sack.

There may be some truth to Bielema's claims. The Illini outgained Ohio State 295 yards to 272, while recording 22 first downs to the Buckeyes' 17. Quarterback Luke Altmyer also passed for 248 yards, besting Sayin's 166 yards through the air.

However, 120 of those total yards came in the fourth quarter after Ohio State had likely already sealed the game, but that might support Bielema's point about going tempo earlier.

Sayin, Curry Top PFF Grades In Week 7

For the third time in four weeks, Sayin and senior defensive end Caden Curry were among Ohio State's three highest-graded players according to Pro Football Focus ratings for the game against Illinois.

For the second week in a row, the red-shirt-freshman quarterback was Ohio State's highest-graded player with a whopping 92.1 rating.

In the Buckeyes' victory over Illinois in Champaign, Sayin completed 19 of his 27 pass attempts for 166 yards and two passing touchdowns. Sayin was the only Buckeye to earn a PFF grade of over 90 more than once this season.

Curry was Ohio State's second highest-graded player of the week behind Sayin with a grade of 79.2. The Greenwood, Ind., native had two tackles – his lowest total of the season through seven games – but added one sack and was able to recover an Altmeyer fumble forced by junior cornerback Mathews on a blitz.

Following Curry and Sayin, sophomore Payton Pierce (74.9) rounded out the top three for Ohio State. The Buckeye linebacker had four tackles (two solo) and a half tackle for loss, and he intercepted a pass that was deflected and tipped in the air by Mathews.

Safety Caleb Downs earned Ohio State's highest mark in the secondary with a 72.3 rating in 72 snaps of action. Downs finished with nine tackles (seven solo).

Josh Padilla, whose primary position is center but who has been rotating in for Tegra Tshabola at right guard for Ohio State, was the Buckeyes' highest-graded lineman with a 67.5 mark on 14 snaps. Left tackle Austin Siereveld was PFF's next-best lineman with a rating of 66.4.

Tight end Bennett Christian (40.9 rating, 20 snaps), defensive end Beau Atkinson (50.5, 24) and Sanchez (56.1, 65) were the Buckeyes' lowest-graded players against Illinois.

OSU Names Five Players Of Game

Mathews and junior linebacker Arvell Reese were named Ohio State's defensive players of the game at Illinois, while linebacker Garrett Stover and cornerback Bryce West earned the honors on special teams for their strong performances in the Buckeyes' win over Illinois.

Mathews finished his afternoon with just one solo tackle but acted as a shutdown corner and made two of the game's biggest plays, one of them when he tipped Altmeyer's pass for an interception in the first quarter. The second was his blitz that forced Altmeyer to fumble.

Both of Mathews' key plays gave Ohio State excellent field position and led to Buckeye touchdown drives.

Reese was all over the field in his own right. The junior linebacker racked up nine

GOOD FOOD + FINE DRINKS

good food
fine drinks

Both locations open for lunch & dinner daily!

1505 W. 5th Ave
Near Grandview Ave
614-817-1198

Monday-Thursday
11 AM -10 PM

Friday-Saturday
11 AM-11 PM

Sunday
Noon-10 PM

741 N. High St
In the Short North
614-298-1014

Monday- Saturday
11:30 AM - 1:30 AM

Sunday
Noon-1:30 AM

KITCHEN UNTIL 1 AM DAILY

presscolumbus.com

tackles (eight solo) and ended his outing with a team-high 1½ sacks. Reese's first sack ended Illinois' chances of scoring just before halftime, and his second time in the backfield came with time waning in the fourth quarter to seal Ohio State's victory.

The sophomore special teamers, Stover and West, each recorded one tackle on the Buckeyes' kick and punt return units. Stover now has five tackles on the year, while West has four through seven games.

Jackson Wants More Opportunities

Jackson is hoping to showcase his pass-rushing skills for the Buckeyes. The senior defensive end is in his first year as a starter along the Buckeyes' defensive line, but he had only 1½ sacks through the Buckeyes' first six games. Jackson's responsibility this season has often been to cage the pocket and not let opposing quarterbacks make plays with their feet.

Jackson told the media on Oct. 15 that he had a conversation with defensive coordinator Matt Patricia about showcasing his skills rushing the quarterback more along Ohio State's defensive line.

"I'm doing things that I wouldn't say I don't like, but sacrificing for the team. I'm a team player first, so I think my year is going well, but I would like to do other things," Jackson said. "I talked to Coach P about that, and he's open to it."

Jackson said his relationship with his defensive coordinator helped give him the confidence to ask for an expanded role.

"Our relationship is great. It's through the roof. When I came up to him and we had those conversations, he was cool with it," Jackson said. "He was just saying, just don't run behind the quarterback, and that was it."

Jackson saw his hopes for an expanded role come to fruition against Wisconsin. He finished the game with one tackle, which was a sack.

Day Trusts Bjork, Carter To Handle Funding

How Ohio State spends any money from a potential private equity deal that the Big Ten could sign is apparently above head coach Ryan Day's pay grade.

According to a report from Yahoo's Ross Dellenger, the Big Ten is considering a proposed capital deal from a University of California pension fund that would infuse over \$2 billion in cash into the conference (read more about the status of the deal in Big Ten Notes on pages 32-33). Dellenger reported that Ohio State would receive approximately \$190 million up front as part of the deal.

During his weekly press conference, Day joked that Bjork would allow him to use all of that money in recruiting.

"Ross said we could use that for the next class, the whole thing. We're good. So I was really excited when he told me that," Day said with a laugh. "I said, 'Man, we're going to put a good class together.'"

On a more serious note, Day said he trusted Bjork and university president Ted Carter to keep him updated and make the

decision on how the athletic department uses the money.

"Every decision that's made is made kind of like the way we (as a football program) are. We have a short-term focus, but more importantly, we have a long-term focus," Day said. "And at Ohio State, this is something that has to be stable. We always have to make sure that we're making great decisions for the future as well as right now. We know we have to win right now. We've got to win this game right here (against Wisconsin this week). That's where the focus is. But we also have to look ahead, because we know what the expectation is in the long term."

"So (Bjork has) been great about communicating to me what's going on and always worked to give us everything we need, but at the same time, he's going to make the decision that's best for the athletic department and the university. So I don't think those final decisions have been made, but I know he's right in the middle of it – so is President Carter – and their hard work is much appreciated."

Day Disagrees With Portal Window Date

On Oct. 7, the NCAA decided to move its lone transfer portal window to Jan. 2-16, and it's safe to say Day is not happy with that decision.

Ohio State's head coach said the date of the window gives teams that make the college football playoffs a disadvantage, because it would likely open and shut while the end of the College Football Playoff is

happening.

"I don't think (the January window is) bad for everybody. I think it's actually good for a lot of teams. But the teams that are making it late into the playoffs are really up against the eight ball," Day said. "Not only are they forced to make decisions while they're still playing, but a lot of school will have started already by the time their season is over. But once the season is over, there is a five-day window when the transfer portal is open, and then there's no opportunity to replace those guys for the teams that are in that situation, so I'm not sure how they expect the teams who are in that situation to replace the players who are leaving in that moment."

It's easy to see why Day wouldn't like the date of the window. Under his guidance, the Buckeyes have finished no worse than No. 7 in the CFP rankings, and at least for the foreseeable future, the Buckeyes seem to be expected to continue to make an expanded CFP.

Day said he complained to the NCAA multiple times about the date of the window, but they apparently didn't listen to him.

"I brought this up several times," he said. "Apparently, it's gone on deaf ears. We obviously want to be in that situation, but whoever it is will probably wake up and say, 'Wait, this isn't right. I have five or six guys that I need to replace on my roster, and I can't now.' At that point, maybe somebody will listen, but as of now, they decided to make the rule and we all have to deal with

Continued On Page 6



Call Terri or Ralph Curcio local agents!

614-230-7676

- We know your Medicare options, the local networks and doctors
- Get scheduled now, to later review your 2026 plan options
- Under age 65 individual plans and dental policies available

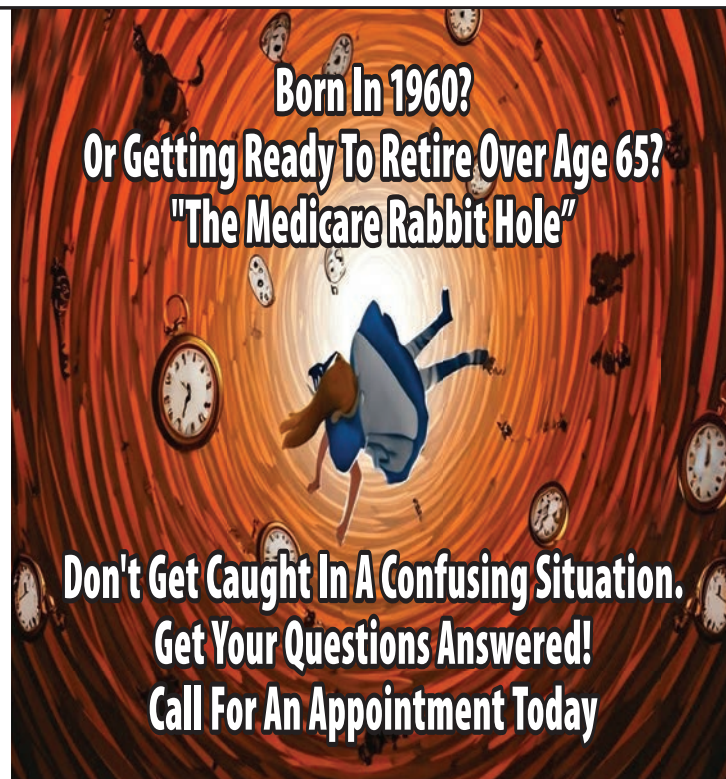
Your agent shouldn't be a phone sales rep

- Our clients call with questions year-round
- Get accurate honest answers that you need
- Over 29 years experience

Remember, don't give your Medicare info on the phone to anyone.



"We do not offer every plan available in your area. Currently we represent 10 organizations which offer 64 products in your area. Please contact Medicare.gov or 1-800-MEDICARE to get information on all of your options."



**Born In 1960?
Or Getting Ready To Retire Over Age 65?
"The Medicare Rabbit Hole"**

**Don't Get Caught In A Confusing Situation.
Get Your Questions Answered!
Call For An Appointment Today**

Home appointments also available.

**Just off 270, Fishinger Rd
3720 Ridge Mill Dr., Ste B
Hilliard 43026**

\$0 Cost/ for our service - no obligation!

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

it. Nobody cares, so move on. That's the way it goes. That's the way we'll look at it. We'll get our plan together and go from there."

Five Bucks Named Midseason All-Americans

Ohio State had five players earn midseason All-America honors from The Associat-

ed Press on Oct. 16.

Downs, Reese and sophomore receiver Jeremiah Smith were all included on the AP's midseason first-team All-American list, while defensive linemen Curry and Kayden McDonald earned second-team honors.

Smith was the Buckeyes' lone offensive player on either list. He had gone for 40 catches for 505 yards and seven receiving touchdowns before receiving the honor. Smith's seven receiving scores were tied for the second most in college football. He also had a 17-yard rushing touchdown in Ohio State's 37-9 win over Ohio on Sept. 13.

Unlike Downs and Smith, Reese wasn't necessarily thought to be a slam-dunk to earn All-America honors before the season. Reese, who didn't start for the Buckeyes last season, has taken the college football world by storm so far this year. Reese's 38 total tackles through six games were the most on the team, and his 4½ sacks were the second most on the team.

Downs has been his usual reliable self at safety for the Buckeyes. The former Alabama safety had gone for 28 total tackles through six games and was one of only three Buckeyes to intercept a pass to that point.

In their first years starting for the Buckeyes, Curry and McDonald have not disappointed. Curry's six sacks were not only the most on the team but were tied for the eighth most in college football. He also had 31 total tackles, including 9½ for loss through six games.

Rushing from the interior, McDonald had gone for three sacks and 26 tackles, including six tackles for loss. He had forced two fumbles, including one that he recovered in Ohio State's win over Illinois.

McGuire To Remain OSU's Starting Punter

Despite struggles throughout the first half of the season, punter Joe McGuire will remain the Buckeyes' starter.

Day said in his weekly press conference on Oct. 14 that, McGuire would retain his spot as Ohio State's starter, despite some inconsistencies in the punting game throughout the season.

"We haven't punted a whole bunch," Day said. "The sample size is probably a mixed bag right now. We need to continually look at it and evaluate it and make sure we're doing what's best. But Joey will be our punter right now."

A product of Melbourne, Australia, McGuire is in his second season as the Buckeye starter, and after a solid season last year, he's had an up-and-down 2025 campaign.

McGuire played a major role in Ohio State's Week 1 win over Texas, with two punts of over 50 yards, including a 55-yard boot, with one punt being pinned inside the Longhorns' 20-yard line.

McGuire didn't punt in the Buckeyes' contests against Grambling State or Ohio, but he had one punt for 35 yards at Wash-

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1985

The efforts of Keith Byars in the triumph over Purdue on Oct. 19 meant a lot as far as various all-time OSU offensive lists were concerned.

Byars' two rushing touchdowns upped his career total to 44, still 12 short of the all-time mark of 56 set by Pete Johnson (73-76). With a career total of 48 TDs, Byars was just 10 short of Johnson's school-record 58.

With 106 rushing yards, Byars went over 3,000 for his four-year career. His 3,090 total moved him closer to the 3,553 of Tim Spencer (1979-82), who was second in program history at the time. Archie Griffin's career total of 5,589 was out of Byars' reach.

The two six-pointers Byars recorded gave him a career total of 288 points, seven shy of Vlade Janakievski's second-place total of 295. Johnson also led there, having 348 career points.

Byars had 3,138 yards in total offense, which left him seventh on that all-time list. Passing Spencer's 3,553 was his next goal.

35 Years Ago — 1990

Ohio State's smoldering senior volcanoes – quarterback Greg Frey and flanker Jeff Graham – erupted all over West Lafayette, Ind., on Oct. 20, helping to bury Purdue under a variety of touchdown pass plays in the Buckeyes' 42-2 romp over the Boilermakers.

The first eruption came midway through the second quarter with a bit of dippy-do. Frey handed the ball off to Graham on an apparent reverse, but the flanker turned and hurled the ball back to his quarterback, who outran the Purdue defense to the end zone for a 60-yard touchdown play.

That made the score 21-2 in favor of the Buckeyes, and they never looked back. Frey and Graham hooked up twice more in the game – the more conventional way from quarterback to receiver – on touchdowns of 58 and 48 yards.

Frey finished the game with eight completions in just 11 attempts for 172 yards and three TDs. He also had the touchdown reception for 60 yards.

30 Years Ago — 1995

In one game against Purdue on Oct. 21, Ohio State simply doubled its blocked kick total for the season.

Buckeyes Mike Vrabel and Alonzo Shavers blocked a pair of Purdue punts in the first quarter, and punter Rob Deignan was tackled on another attempt.

The blocks raised OSU's season total to four. Matt Jacobs blocked a punt against Pittsburgh, and Orlando Pace leaped to deflect a Wisconsin field-goal attempt.

But against Purdue, the three special teams punt snuffs in the first quarter set the tone for OSU's 28-0 rout.

The OSU defense stopped Purdue's first drive, and Deignan was sent in to kick the ball away on fourth down. Vrabel slid past Chris Koeppen and blocked the punt. OSU's Central McClellion was the first of a group of four Buckeyes in the area to pounce on the loose ball at the Purdue 24.

That set up OSU's first score, but for Vrabel, it was a sweet redemption. The week before at Wisconsin he thought he had blocked a punt but had only the punter's foot. He was flagged for roughing the kicker on the play, giving the Badgers a key first down.

"I was a little gun-shy after last week," Vrabel said. "To finally be able to block and get my hand on the ball was a great feeling.

"Last week, I messed up, and everybody's asking, 'How'd you miss the punt?' This week, to finally get my hands on it, was great."

25 Years Ago — 2000

Speaking at his Oct. 9 luncheon, head coach John Cooper was dismayed to hear about how his team celebrated its win at Wisconsin two days earlier.

According to reports, several players stomped on the "W" logo in the center of the field, and wide receiver Ken-Yon Rambo admitted to stomping on a Wisconsin T-shirt.

"It bugs me a little bit," Cooper said. "I don't like to see that. I guess that's retaliation for what they did to us here last year (after UW's 42-17 win), that's what some of the players said. I was not aware of that. I did not know someone gave Ken-Yon a shirt, and he stomped on it.

"It's hard keeping them from crossing the line. You don't want to dampen their enthusiasm, but there are certain times you have to address that. Ohio State's a first-class program, and we want to conduct ourselves accordingly."

20 Years Ago — 2005

In the week leading up to his team's Oct. 15 homecoming matchup with Michigan State, Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel noted to reporters that his team topped the conference in time of possession, and he said that one important statistic he was concerned with was that his team was last in the league in turn-over margin.

Against the Spartans, the Buckeyes held the ball for just over 19 minutes, and they turned the ball over four times to MSU's zero.

And yet when the clock expired in Ohio Stadium, Ohio State was on top, legging out a 35-24 victory. The Spartans outgained the Buckeyes 456-386 in yards of total offense and made 27 first downs to the home team's 13, yet they were outpointed in the one all-important category.

"They got us sometimes. We got them sometimes," said OSU junior safety Donte Whitner. "And we're just thankful that we got them more times than they got us."

15 Years Ago — 2010

Wisconsin landed an early haymaker to the chin of top-ranked Ohio State, and the reeling Buckeyes never fully recovered as they dropped a 31-18 decision to the upstart Badgers on Oct. 16 in front of 81,194 frenzied fans at Camp Randall Stadium.

Senior return man David Gilreath took the game's opening kickoff 97 yards for a touchdown, and Wisconsin tallied a pair of rushing touchdowns from junior tailback John Clay to take a 21-0 lead at the 13:15 mark of the second quarter.

It was a hole from which the Buckeyes could never escape. Clay's second touchdown capped a 19-play, 89-yard drive against an Ohio State defense that was battered and bullied all night by the Badgers' offensive line. The Buckeyes entered the game as the nation's fourth-toughest defense to run on, allowing an average of only 78.7 yards over their first six games. Wisconsin eclipsed that total by the 3:15 mark of the first quarter and finished with 184 yards on the ground.

10 Years Ago — 2015

Despite going nearly 11 months between starts, J.T. Barrett didn't miss a beat as No. 1 Ohio State trampled host Rutgers, 49-7, on Oct. 24.

The sophomore Barrett completed 14 of 18 passes for 223 yards and ran for 101 more to go with five total touchdowns, complementing the near-shutout pitched by the Buckeye defense. He hadn't started since breaking a bone in his ankle against Mich-

igan on Nov. 29, but head coach Urban Meyer had announced earlier in the week that Barrett would be back in the lineup.

"J.T. Barrett came in and played very well, energized us," Meyer said after the game.

The Buckeyes scored all 49 points in a row before Rutgers sneaked in a late touchdown with Ohio State's second-team defense on the field and just 13 seconds on the clock.

Meyer said he was very pleased with the win and praised the defense, regardless of the last-second score.

"It all starts with great defense, and I really feel like our defense has been getting better all year," he said.

Five Years Ago — 2020

Few places in college football are as electric as Ohio Stadium on a Saturday afternoon in the fall, with more than 107,000 fans regularly filling the stands to cheer on their beloved Buckeyes – except that wasn't the case on Oct. 24 when Ohio State opened its 2020 season with a 52-17 win over Nebraska.

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic not only pushed the start of the Big Ten's conference-only season back seven weeks but also limited attendance at games to family of the players and coaches, as well as university officials, medical personnel, television crews, security and members of the media. In all, the Buckeyes and Cornhuskers played in front of 1,344 people – the smallest crowd in the 99-season history of Ohio Stadium, breaking the previous low of 5,482 spectators set in a defeat of Wilmington College in 1926.

"It was definitely weird," Ohio State junior quarterback Justin Fields said after the game. "I was looking up to the stands to celebrate with some fans, but nobody was really out there. Of course, it was a little bit different, but we just try to bring our own energy to the game. I think we handled it well."

One Year Ago — 2024

The NCAA officially changed the rule that allowed Oregon head coach Dan Lanning to put 12 men on the field against Ohio State late in the fourth quarter of its 32-31 win over the Buckeyes on Oct. 12, helping the Ducks run the clock down an extra few seconds.

"After the two-minute timeout in either half, if the defense commits a substitution foul and 12 or more players are on the field and participate in a down, officials will penalize the defense for the foul and at the option of the offended team, reset the game clock back to the time displayed at the snap," the rules memo from the NCAA said.

"The game clock will then restart on the next snap. If the 12th defender was attempting to exit but was still on the field at the snap and had no influence on the play, then the normal substitution penalty would be enforced with no clock adjustment."

As it stood prior, when a team committed a substitution foul inside the final two minutes of either half, the clock reset to how much time was left before the play began.

Lanning and Oregon took advantage of the now-closed loophole in the Oct. 12 matchup with the Buckeyes, where the clock ran down from 10 to six seconds remaining in the game during the play when the Ducks had 12 men on the field.

Even more, Ohio State gained only 5 yards due to the penalty, making it tough for Will Howard and his offense to get into field-goal range and find an open man downfield, leading to Howard sliding at the Oregon 26-yard line with no time remaining on the clock.

BSB Subscribers Show Support Through VIP Program

Now is the time for loyal Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers to show their support through our VIP subscription program as we struggle through these times of high inflation, which have affected all small businesses. As most of you know, the newspaper business these days is challenging in even the best of times.

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

A VIP upgrade can easily pay for itself each year with special VIP discounts and perks.

VIP subscribers enjoy a 5 percent discount on any Ohio State football trip booked through Reynolds Travel. And VIP subscribers receive a certificate good for \$10 off at Roosters restaurants, the "Fun, Casual Joint," a \$10 gift card from College Traditions, as well as a card from either Rusty Bucket or Cameron Mitchell restaurants good for \$10 off your next food purchase.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Elite Wachsman Donors (in honor of late BSB assistant publisher Karen Wachsman): Beth Wachsman, Columbus; Brian Bucher, Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.; Fred Krisch, Cleveland; Jim Walton, Naples, Fla.

Elite-Plus Donors: Roger Albrecht, Columbus; Fredrick Bradshaw, Columbus; Betty Devaul, Uhrichsville, Ohio; Gary Devaul, Uhrichsville, Ohio; Bob Doyle, Beavercreek, Ohio; Tom Farish, Greensboro, Ga.; Terry T. Farmer, Lancaster, Ohio; Sander Flaum, New York; Raminder Gill, Colusa, Calif.; Mike Heimann, Ashland, Ohio; Freddie and Joe Huber, Walpole, Mass.; Carl R. Jeffery DDS, Van Wert, Ohio; Gregory Jones, Calabasas, Calif.; Noreen

Kenney-Campbell, Mount Pleasant, S.C.; Don Kersey, Springboro, Ohio; Kris Kersey, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Larry Larson, Ladera Ranch, Calif.; Dan LaVille, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Jerry Lawhun, Rio Verde, Ariz.; Alan Lord, Reynoldsburg, Ohio; Dr. Jonathan Lucas, Portsmouth, Ohio; W. Lee Mackewiz O.D., Bear, Del.; Allen McMillin Jr., Logan, Ohio; Jeff Montgomery, Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.; Theodore Pegram, Eden Prairie, Minn.; In memory of Hugh and Dixie Rea, Washington Court House, Ohio; In memory of Lisa Rea, Greenfield, Ohio; Bob Redfield, Dublin, Ohio; Jim Reichler, Toledo; Field Retterer, Bonita Springs, Fla.; The Russell Group United, Columbus; Jim Shindler, Sylvania, Ohio; John Thomas, Kentfield, Calif.; Dominic Verrilli III, Columbus, Ohio; Bob Weber, Mishawaka, Ind.; Richard Yoss, Woodsfield, Ohio; Edwin Zechman Jr., Sarasota, Fla.; Jim Zimmerman, Springfield, Ohio.

Elite Donors: Robert Ankerman, Holland, Mich.; Marshall Beck, Sarasota, Fla.; Phillip Blue, Prior Lake, Minn.; In memory of Norwin Brovitz, Oakmont, Pa.; David Cobb, Tipp City, Ohio; Iris Cremean, Walbridge, Ohio; Richard Dunkelberger, Groveport, Ohio; Fred Fingerhut, Phoenix; Chalk Fry DDS, Sarasota, Fla.; Laura Granich, Columbus; Paul E. Hackett, The Villages, Fla.; James Hamilton, Murrysburg, Pa.; Joe Helmer, Westerville, Ohio; Curtis High, Beavercreek, Ohio; Frank Klaus, Pepper Pike, Ohio; John Krepop, The Villages, Fla.; Paul Lappert, Columbus; Tom Leggett, Dublin, Ohio; Brian Livingston, Louisville, Ky.; Robert Maddux, Cincinnati; George Massad, Bowling Green, Ohio; Mike from Marietta, Ga.; Col. George R. Nelson, New Albany, Ohio; Greg Place, Greenville, Ohio; Robert Risher, Celina, Ohio; James Robinson Jr., Council Bluffs, Iowa; C. David Shaffer, Akron; Charlie Shaffer, Edison, Ohio; Bill Short, Sparta, Ohio; Mark Skinner, Columbus; Kyle Smith, Marietta, Ga.; Dr. Earl Strimple, Washington, D.C.; James Thomas, The Villages, Fla.; Chuck Underwood, Miamisburg, Ohio; Dan van Blaricom, Dublin, Ohio; Elliott S. Wettstein, Waverly, Ohio; J.D. Wientjes, Mobridge, S.D.; Kenny Wright, Heath, Ohio; David J. Young, Supply, N.C.; Anonymous, Columbus; Anonymous, Council Bluffs, Iowa; Anonymous, Lancaster, Ohio; Anonymous, Lewisburg, W.Va.

Scarlet VIPs: William Adams, Willoughby, Ohio; Anthony Ananthanarayanan, Rochester, Mich.; Bill Bell, Chandler, Ariz.; Greg Brooks, Gahanna, Ohio; Marty Brumbaugh, Troy, Ohio; Dominic Caminiti, Canal Winchester, Ohio; Scott Clark, Gahanna, Ohio; Donald Collins, Kenton, Ohio; Joseph A. Cusma Sr., Massillon, Ohio; Dennis Dahm, Sandusky, Ohio; Julie Ellis, Apple Valley, Calif.; Mike Freeburn, Columbus; Tom Goila, Cincinnati; Gail Gonder, Fort Worth, Texas; Fred Grace, Utica, Ohio; Dave Hamilton, Canton, Ohio; Richard G. Hannan Jr., Chillicothe, Ohio; Doug Harris, Lima, Ohio; John Hay, Wilder, Ky.; Ed Helal, Ashland, Ohio; Phil Helal, Strongsville, Ohio; Gerald Mann, Palm Coast, Fla.; Ed Maxwell, Jackson Center, Ohio; Dave Palmer, Washington, Mich.; In memory of Ike Reynolds, Columbus; Lawrence Romanoff, Powell, Ohio; Jim Shaw, Lake Forest, Calif.; Dr. William Thomas, Gallipolis, Ohio; Anonymous, Dallas; Anonymous, Gaffney, S.C.; Anonymous, Girard, Ohio; Anonymous, Norwalk, Ohio.

ington and averaged 43.0 yards on two punts vs. Minnesota and 37.8 yards on four punts against Illinois. None of his seven boots traveled more than 45 yards, though three were pinned inside the 20-yard line.

Although McGuire's overall performance has been below-average in comparison to NCAA averages, he doesn't meet the minimum requirement of 2½ punts per game to qualify for the statistic, but if he did, his 41.0-yard average would rank 67th nationally.

With McGuire faltering at times, there has been talk about playing the fellow Aussie and 6-7, 255-pound McLarty. Though McLarty has attempted just one punt this season – a 45-yarder against Grambling State – some have called for the Melbourne native to earn more playing time.

Day said Ohio State puts a strong emphasis on its punt game and special teams overall, noting that it's a consistent point of focus during practice and an area where the Buckeyes still see room to improve.

"We work at it a lot," he said. "It will be the first thing we do on Tuesday. I think we have the right guys in the game. We always take a look at that, in terms of protection and guys covering. I think it's been solid, but I know we can do better."

Two Frosh Bucks Shed Black Stripes

Two more freshman Buckeyes became "official" members of the team on Oct. 15 when defensive end Epi Sitanilei and running back Isaiah West shed their black stripes after practice.

Both Sitanilei and West have made it into games for the Buckeyes this season, late in blowout wins, with West getting more extended action against Wisconsin.

Sitanilei has made one tackle (one half for loss) – which came against Illinois – and recovered a fumble in four contests. West is fourth in rushes for OSU running backs, getting 21 chances this season and going for 104 yards and a touchdown. He most

recently was the leading rusher against the Badgers with 55 yards and has been in four games total.

West joins Bo Jackson as the two freshman running backs to have their black stripes removed. Anthony Rogers, who was not an early enrollee for the Buckeyes, is the only one remaining.

Sitanilei joins freshman Zion Grady among ends getting their black stripes removed.

They are the 26th and 27th players to have their black stripes removed in 2025 and the 14th and 15th freshmen to do so.

Day Says Franklin Will "Land On His Feet"

While Ohio State is off to an ideal 7-0 start to its 2025 season, fellow Big Ten power Penn State got off to a 3-3 start, losing its first three Big Ten games. The Nittany Lions' losing streak led to former head coach James Franklin being fired. During his press conference, Day said Franklin, who led the

Nittany Lions from 2014-25, will land on his feet.

"James, anytime you are somewhere for as long as he was, he did a lot of great things," Day said. "We had a lot of great games against each other. He's going to land on his feet. He's a really good coach."

The Nittany Lions' struggles against marquee opponents that Franklin was known for continued this year. Penn State suffered a 30-24 overtime loss to Oregon on Sept. 27 and followed that up with a stunning 42-37 loss to a previously winless UCLA team. The Nittany Lions couldn't get on the right track on Oct. 11. Instead, they lost as a big favorite to Northwestern 22-21. Franklin was fired just one day after Penn State's loss to Northwestern.

"That's the world we live in," Day continued about Franklin's firing. "It's something that I think for all of us, we just need to focus on what matters to us and what's at hand. I said it before, whether it's the negative

Continued On Page 8

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 7

things or the positive things, those things are all kind of noise out there. There's a lot that comes at you, whether you're a player or a coach. Our ability to focus and concentrate on what's important is what's critical, so that's what we have to do."

Cooper Named AFC Defensive Player of the Week

Former Ohio State defensive end Jonathan Cooper was named AFC Offensive Player of the Week for his performance in the Denver Broncos' 13-11 victory over the New York Jets on Oct. 12.

Cooper finished his outing for the Broncos with five tackles and two sacks, the second a takedown of former Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields on fourth-and-8 with a minute remaining in the fourth quarter that sealed Denver's win over New York.

During a press conference on Oct. 15, Cooper said receiving the recognition served as both motivation and a reminder to stay grounded as he continues to build on his success.

"It just instills a sense of humbleness," Cooper said. "A sense of responsibility hit me. It's nice to know that I'm being recognized for my work. I feel like there's just many more to come. It's just motivating me to do more. It means that there's going to be more eyes on you on Sunday, and that means you just have to be more prepared, more ready for the moment. It's just getting back to work for me. I was just humbled and I was so appreciative. It honestly just makes

Upgrade Down To \$20, Next Issue Mails Nov. 4

For those having problems with delivery of their Buckeye Sports Bulletin, the cost to upgrade your subscription to first-class mail in an envelope is now down to just \$20 through the Michigan game and \$30 through the playoffs and the Recruiting Wrap-Up.

Just give us a call at (614) 486-2202 or (800) 760-2862 to order by credit card. Or you can send your check, money order or credit card information (don't forget your three- or four-digit security code) to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212. Be sure to mention either the "Football Upgrade" or the "Recruiting Upgrade."

The next print issue of BSB does not mail until Nov. 4. There is no reason to wait for your next Buckeye Sports Bulletin print edition to get the latest OSU sports news, including any recruiting activity. The BSB staff will be reporting from every press conference or other availability and following all of the Ohio State sports activity. All the news is available in real time at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com.

BuckeyeSports.com offers plenty of additional content not found in your paper. The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff mans BuckeyeSports.com, reporting on the breaking stories, plus posting additional features.

Along with daily posts, we offer reprints from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives as part of our popular Reprint Thursdays. The always entertaining Staff Predictions appear the Friday before every game.

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

We want to remind readers that the complete edition of each

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

If you are not already taking advantage of BuckeyeSports.com, simply email your name, address and preferred email address to subscriptions@buckeyesports.com, and we will send back easy instructions on how to access the site. Don't forget, subscriptions@buckeyesports.com is our email address, not the website. We will send you directions on how to access the site.

If you are a current subscriber and have been unable to access all features on the site, please give us a call at (614) 486-2202 and we will help you gain access.

And here is one last upgrade offer.

You can get your upgrade to first-class through the Michigan game for free by taking advantage of "Frank's Special Offer," as described in the last issue.

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.

A one-year subscription (regularly \$124.95) is \$104.95, and two years (regularly \$199.95) is just \$179.95. Either will include the free first-class upgrade through the 2025 Michigan game. You must mention "Frank's Special offer."

me want to work harder."

Through the first six games of the NFL season, Cooper helped lead Denver to a 4-2 record and amassed 10 tackles, two pass breakups and 4½ sacks, which is tied for eighth in the league.

It marks the second straight week that a former Ohio State player has won an AFC Player of the Week award. Former Buckeye and Houston Texans quarterback C.J. Stroud earned the honors the previous week.

Former OSU Forward Thomas Retires

Former Ohio State forward Deshaun Thomas retired from professional basket-

ball on Oct. 11. Thomas, who played for Ohio State from 2010-13, had a decorated career overseas. Thomas spent 12 seasons bouncing around the world and playing for prominent European teams, such as FC Barcelona, Panathinaikos, Bayern Munich, along with several others. He spent two seasons with Panathinaikos from 2018-20 and averaged a career-high 13.9 points per game and 4.4 rebounds. Thomas helped the club win back-to-back Greek Basketball league titles.

"The time has come for me to hang up the shoes," Thomas said in a three-minute video posted to his Twitter account. "Basketball has been such a great thing for me and my life. Coming up from a small town, Fort Wayne, Ind., it's been my way out, it's

been my safe boat.

"Now it's time to just move on. I have a family. I have three boys who are looking up to me to figure out the journey," Thomas continued. "I have to pass the torch to them, show them the way and show them how to be a man."

Thomas earned All-America honors during his senior season with the Buckeyes. The 6-7 forward averaged 19.8 points and 5.9 rebounds per game for an Ohio State team that won the Big Ten tournament and made it to the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament.

For his Ohio State career, he averaged 14.4 points and 5.0 rebounds per game.



**SIP, STROLL
& SEE
HISTORIC
GROVE CITY
DORA**

*Designated Outdoor
Refreshment Area*

Plank's
ON BROADWAY

*Grove City's
Original Tavern*

**4022 Broadway
614-875-7800**

Harr's **FORKLIFT
SERVICE, INC**

SALES | RENTAL | SERVICE | PARTS

NOBLELIFT KOMATSU



harrs-forklift.com

**1181 Refugee Road
Columbus, OH 43207**

(614) 443-4651

Fax: (614) 443-4711

On Wisconsin? No Wisconsin In 34-0 OSU Rout

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Quarterback Julian Sayin was nearly perfect. The Ohio State defense was even better.

Sayin threw for a career-high 393 yards and four touchdowns and the defense limited Wisconsin to 144 total yards for its second shutout of the season when No. 1 Ohio State defeated the beleaguered Badgers 34-0 at Camp Randall Stadium in Madison, Wis., on Oct. 18 before an announced crowd of 72,795, though many students thought it was Halloween because they came dressed as empty seats.

Sayin was lethal in the first quarter when he completed 14 of 15 for 169 yards and touchdown passes of 33 and 10 to Carnell Tate for a 17-0 lead for the Buckeyes (7-0, 4-0).

He finished the game 36 of 42 while Tate had six catches for 111 yards.

The Badgers (2-5, 0-4) have lost five straight and followed a 37-0 home loss to Iowa with another clunker.

Battered Badgers

After a Wisconsin three-and-out to start the game, a shanked punt ended up bouncing for a 55-yard boot to the OSU 11.

No problem. Sayin was brilliant on the 89-yard, nine-play, 4:34 drive, as was Tate on a 33-yard touchdown catch for a 7-0 lead at 8:25.

Sayin was 8 for 8 for 95 yards.

Tate, on the second play, had a catch for 15 in between short tosses to Jeremiah Smith. Max Klare had consecutive receptions for a total of 15 yards, and Bo Jackson out of the backfield hauled in a ball for 16 yards to the 32.

After six straight passes, Jackson lost a yard and a false start made it second-and-16. Brandon Inniss gained back 5 with a catch but exited with a left leg injury. He would return.

Sayin then threw a perfect pass down the middle for Tate to go up between two defenders and bring it down before tumbling out of the back of the end zone.

Three plays after the kickoff, linebacker Sonny Styles intercepted hard-luck Hunter Simmons. His pass to running back Cade Yacamelli went off his face mask to Styles at the Wisconsin 48 and was returned to the 43.

But the Buckeyes had to settle for a 38-yard field goal by Jayden Fielding to make it 10-0 at the 4:40 mark.

Sayin made completions of 6 yards to Jackson and 14 to Smith to run his totals to 10 for 10 for 115 yards, but on the next throw to Smith in the end zone, it was broken up by Ricardo Hallman.

On second down, Jackson made his third catch of the game, a 3-yarder to the 20, but Sayin was forced to scramble for no gain prior to the field goal.

A 52-yard Wisconsin punt to the 17 was returned 13 yards by Inniss, and the Buckeyes were on the march again from their 30.

CJ Donaldson Jr.'s first carry went for 13 yards. Sayin went back to Tate for 27 to the UW 30 before Donaldson's catch gained 14 to the 16. After Jackson earned 6 yards on two carries, Tate caught a 10-yard TD at the left boundary to make it 17-0 with four



SONNY BROCKWAY

HOLD ON — The Wisconsin offensive line did everything it could, legal or otherwise, to stop linebacker Sonny Styles from reaching quarterback Hunter Simmons, who was sacked twice. Styles had a first-quarter interception which led to a field goal.

seconds left in the quarter. The drive was 70 yards and six plays in 2:41.

Ohio State had 187 total yards, while UW had 34 yards.

The Badgers finally started to move and reached the OSU 33 on a 24-yard catch by Lance Mason. A 7-yard sack by Arvell Reese and a false start helped end the threat, and a 42-yard punt placed the ball at the 3.

OSU had a third-and-2 from its 23 when Donaldson lost a yard, and Joe McGuire's 42-yard punt was caught at the Badger 36 by former Buckeye receiver Jayden Ballard.

Wisconsin gave the ball back on a 62-yard punt by Sean West into the end zone.

The Buckeyes went quickly downfield to the UW 20 but came up with nothing when Fielding sent a 38-yard field-goal attempt to the right.

Smith got catches of 10, 9 and 8 yards on consecutive plays to the OSU 47 to start the possession. Mylan Graham came off the bench to get a foot down along the right sideline to gain 10. After a false start, freshman receiver Quincy Porter grabbed an 8-yarder, and freshman backup running back Isaiah West ran for 14. Tight end Max Klare's two receptions gained only 6 yards to the 20, and a third-down incompleteness brought in Fielding for the miss with 1:07 left. The Badgers then punted for the fifth time with four seconds remaining.

Sayin in the half was 23 of 26 for 235 yards while the Buckeyes managed just 35 rushing yards. Tate had 85 receiving yards

on four catches, and Smith had six catches for 52 yards. UW gained 69 yards, 49 of them passing.

Methodical

The Buckeyes began from the 25 after the third-quarter kickoff and moved rapidly in chunks, but they once again failed to get into the end zone and relied on a Fielding 37-yard field goal to make it 20-0 with 8:42 to go in the third.

Jackson made a catch for 16. Tate pulled in a 19-yarder on fourth-and-4 from the UW 43, and he gained another 7 on the next play, but Jackson's run lost 4, and a false start made it third-and-12. A catch by Inniss got 8 back, but it wasn't enough.

Later, the Buckeyes avoided punting deep in their territory when Smith got 14 yards on third down when they needed 15 to reach the

27. Smith was originally given a first down, but a review showed his knee was downed about a foot short. Sayin then sneaked for 2 yards.

Jackson caught a pass of 16 yards to the OSU 44, and Porter had a 22-yard catch-and-run to the 27. Sayin took off and rushed for 8, and Isaiah West ran for 15 to the 4 and followed with 2 more.

Sayin, against a stacked line, tossed a 2-yard TD to open tight end Will Kacmarek for a 27-0 lead with 1:15 left in the third. The 13-play series went 83 yards in 6:21.

On the first play of the fourth quarter, the Badgers faced a fourth-and-19 from the 16 when punter Sean West ran for 20 yards to the surprise of the Buckeyes. It was all for naught because he later had to punt again. His 55-yarder was returned 18 yards by Inniss to the OSU 23.

Sayin stayed in the game to throw a 26-yarder to Smith on the first play, and it culminated in a 13-yard scoring pass to Inniss with 5:35 to play for the 34-0 final. Jackson had two runs for 9 yards, and Isaiah West carried five times for 24 yards during a series that used 11 plays and 5:32 to go 77 yards.

The Badgers moved from the 20 to the OSU 19, but with the first-team defense on the sideline exhorting their teammates, the Badgers lost a yard on a run, and a fourth-down pass lost another 5 to the 25 with a jarring hit by Aaron Scott Jr., where the Buckeyes took over with the blanking assured with 41 seconds left. Lincoln Kienholz entered and took a knee for a 1-yard loss to end the game.

"I hope nobody is getting used to that because, like, that doesn't just happen," OSU coach Day said of the shutouts. "This is a lot of hard work that gets put in. Give the defense a ton of credit, give the staff a ton of credit. Obviously, our guys on defense played their tails off."

The other shutout was 70-0 vs. Grambling State on Sept. 6.

Notes

The Buckeyes added 98 rushing yards to Sayin's 393 passing for a total of 491. ... The Badgers gained 49 passing and 95 rushing. ... Smith made a game-high nine catches for 97 yards. Jackson (57 yards) and Klare (29) each made five catches. ... West ran for 55 yards on nine totes, and Jackson added 26 yards on 10 carries. ... Simmons was 6 of 12 for 54 yards and an interception for the Badgers. ... Caleb Downs led the Buckeyes with six tackles.

You Can Count On These Services From

THE QUICKPRINT CENTRE

3535 Fishinger Blvd. Suite 100, Hilliard, OH 43026
614-488-2683 • FAX 614-488-0059 • qpoh@aol.com

Offset-Printing
Typesetting
NCR Forms
Laminating
Brochures

Digital Color Copies
Ship UPS
Fax Service
Announcements
Wedding Invitations

Digital B&W Copies
Rubber Stamps
Business Cards
Binding
Labels

Sayin Shows Running Prowess When Needed

Continued From Page 1

and trying to do my best to execute the offense and keep improving,” said Sayin when asked about Tate’s comments on the quarterback being in the race for the Heisman trophy. “I think our offense is all about continuing to improve week by week. We’re not where we want to be yet, and we want to be playing our best football in November and December.”

While the Wisconsin program might be in a bad spot compared to where it has been the rest of the 21st century, the defense still wasn’t one to sneeze at. It may not be the best in the Big Ten, but the Badgers’ defense came into the game giving up 22.7 points per game, 58th in the country, and 317.0 yards per game, 34th in the nation. Sayin nearly doubled the passing yards other teams have managed against Wisconsin (219.5 per game).

But still, when the Buckeyes had issues getting down the field, Day said it was nobody other than themselves that beat them.

“(The Badgers) don’t always get put in the best situations throughout the season, but like I said to our offense, this is a defense that tackles well,” Day said. “They’re well coached, Luke does a good job. When we broke down, it was because we either lost focus or didn’t execute all the way down the field.”

While Sayin’s rushing stats didn’t pop

off the stat sheet – finishing with five rushes for 7 yards, which includes a sack – he also showed again that he can be a rushing threat when the Ohio State offense needs him to be.

He probably won’t be able to break free for a run like former Buckeye quarterback Will Howard did last season, but on a quarterback keeper on a read option in the third quarter, Sayin broke off for an 8-yard gain when the run game was struggling to get going.

He was also very good scrambling when he needed to and made plays outside of the pocket often, which senior defensive end Caden Curry said the Buckeyes have prepared him for in practices.

“If we could hit him, that would be awesome too,” Curry said. “Obviously, he’s good at getting out of the pocket, and he feels that pressure from us, I hope throughout practice. So I’m glad to see him use those tools against other teams and see how it pays off for us.”

But outside of the pass game and the defense, in classic Day fashion, he said there were still many problems he saw in the 34-point win that the Buckeyes are going to need to address.

“Some of the run game needs to be better. We’ll go back and figure out what’s going on with that. We had the special teams breakdown, which we can’t have happen. That can cost you a game. That was ridic-

ulous,” Day said. “So there are certainly things that I will get into. I don’t want to give anybody anything to look at, but we know what our issues are. We have to continually work on them to get them better and continually put guys in position to be successful.”

Buckeyes Not Restless

Throughout this season and last, Day and the Buckeyes have shown that they are content to move slowly down the field and keep games closer than they might have been in the past.

Against Wisconsin, Ohio State was in complete and total control of the game the entire 60 minutes, and the Badgers basically never even threatened to score. It was obvious early on that that would be the case throughout the game, and it seemed that Day and Hartline took that as an opportunity to get some backup players some work.

They didn’t fully take their starters out of the game. Many of them stayed in throughout the entire contest, but it was part of a season-long strategy that the Buckeyes have been using this year.

With the new clock rules last year, the Buckeyes are running fewer plays on average than ever before, which has been a purposeful approach.

They are hoping to keep their top con-

tributors healthy and fresh for what is looking like it could be another extended season for Ohio State. If the Buckeyes win out the regular season, they will have a 13th game in the Big Ten championship and could get a bye in the College Football Playoff, depending on how the game in Indianapolis on Dec. 6 goes.

But there is a realistic possibility they could have to play 17 football games this season, more than any modern college football team has in a year. That would only be if they have to play in the first round of the CFP, but Day wants to be ready for that late stretch, which will be the toughest games of the season.

Last year, the approach seemed to have worked, with a national championship trophy on display in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center to show for it. And since that worked, Day seems to be taking that same approach this year.

Because of that approach, wide receivers Quincy Porter and Mylan Graham, running back Isaiah West, and many other young players who aren’t regular contributors got into the game for a good chunk of snaps against the Badgers.

With so many players to spread the wealth between in a game where there were quite a few yards to add to players’ résumés, Day still tried to make sure the ball got into the hands of the usual play-makers, Smith and Tate, while making



Roosters
A FUN, CASUAL JOINT

HOME OF THE AWARD WINNING WINGS AND WAIT STAFF!

WINGS ★ SALADS ★ SANDWICHES ★ PIZZAS ★ SUBS ★ FUN



SONNY BROCKWAY

BORN TO RUN — Backup running back Isaiah West stepped to the forefront when given the opportunity against Wisconsin. The freshman led the Buckeyes with 55 yards on nine rushes that included a 15-yarder in the 34-0 victory.

sure they weren't overworked.

The head coach has many times this season praised his players for their unselfishness, and he did so again after this win.

"That's hard to do sometimes because these guys work hard," Day said. "We try to do what we can to make sure these guys get touches, but when you start to focus on those things, you can find yourself way out of whack. I'm not sitting and saying that sometimes we don't do that. We're guilty of doing that sometimes because we love our guys and want to do that. But we have to stay disciplined."

Even when the backups were on the field, the Buckeyes were still clearly the better team of the two in the game. Curry gave credit to the young players who have been working hard in practice and often don't get to see game time.

"Seeing the young guys get out there and just seeing how hard they worked throughout the week and getting that chance to go out there and prove themselves was great," Curry said. "Obviously it doesn't always go the way that they want. Seeing it go the way they did want it to go and them making those plays, it's definitely nice to see."

Look Ahead, Michigan Watch

Now that the Buckeyes are going into

their second off week of the season, the next time they will be on the field, it will be in the month of November.

When the year began, the Nov. 1 match-

up with Penn State might have looked a little more intimidating on the schedule when the Nittany Lions were still one of the national championship favorites.

But now that Penn State has lost four straight games and is winless in Big Ten play, it looks like another team that the Buckeyes should be able to handle if they play well.

That's not to say that Day and Ohio State will be taking the Lions lightly. Veteran quarterback Drew Allar is out for the season with an injury, but most of the roster that was considered talented enough to be one of the favorites to win the title will still be heading to Columbus to play the Buckeyes, and now they will be extremely hungry for their first conference win of the season.

There will also likely be some motivation to try to do what they couldn't with former head coach James Franklin at the helm: beat Ohio State.

The Nittany Lions have no chance at making the Big Ten Championship Game or the College Football Playoff anymore, so Ohio State is the biggest game remaining on their schedule, given the recent history the two programs have against each other.

The Buckeyes aren't in the same situation. They could lose to the Nittany Lions and still make the playoffs.

But for many Buckeye fans, this season will be successful if they are able to do one thing that Day hasn't been able to since 2019 – beat Michigan.

As the current odds-on favorite to win the national championship for a second straight season, the Buckeyes are surely hoping to go back-to-back. The players and coaches have made that clear since they came back to Columbus from the title game in Atlanta on Jan. 20.

But even without a title win, many fans will still walk away from the 2025 season thinking it's a success if OSU can top the Wolverines on Nov. 29.

For those keeping track, Ohio State and Michigan now have two common opponents after the Oct. 18 games. The Wol-

verines topped Washington in Ann Arbor, Mich., 24-7, on the same day OSU beat the Badgers, and they beat Wisconsin at home on Oct. 4 by a score of 24-10.

The Buckeyes beat the Huskies 24-6 in Husky Stadium in late September and were able to hold the Badgers scoreless at Camp Randall Stadium.

Of course, anyone who knows the history of the rivalry between Ohio State and Michigan knows that when the ball is kicked off, the transitive property of which team beat whom on what day means nothing. But until Nov. 29, that's all there will be to work with.

Day wouldn't say that he's thinking about Michigan at this point, but it would be hard to believe that the game date isn't one that is circled in scarlet on his calendar.

With Penn State, Purdue, UCLA and Rutgers on the schedule before the Wolverines, Ohio State has the ability to cruise into The Game with an undefeated record and possibly the world's biggest chip on its shoulder.

But for now, Ohio State will focus on bettering itself until it gets to that game in hopes of not losing a fifth straight game to Michigan for the first time since the Wolverines won six straight from 1922-27.

He wasn't asked specifically about the rivalry, but Tate said it is hard not to look forward sometimes when the Buckeyes are playing in games like the blowout against Wisconsin. But they do everything in their power not to get ahead of themselves.

"It's always hard. There are a lot of distractions out there in college football. A lot of teams out there losing, and a lot of things are at stake," Tate said. "But you also have to live in the present moment. You can't affect the future. You can only affect what's going on right now. So we just have to worry about now and not worry about what's in front of us the next week or the week after that."



Train to be the BEST you can be!

*Designing fitness programs to
meet your personal needs.*

Personal Training

Group Fitness Training

Sports Specific Training

Owned and Operated By:

Brent Johnson

614-570-9918

B-fit.training@hotmail.com

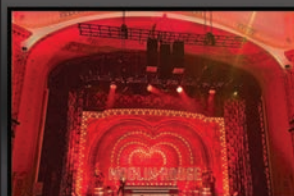
Located at 2378 East Main Street in Bexley, Ohio

MAIN EVENT

TICKET SERVICE

Tickets to Events Anywhere!

Concerts • Theatre • Sporting Events



OSU Football & Basketball • Cleveland Browns • Blue Jackets

Nationwide Arena • Schottenstein Arena • NFL • NBA • NHL

We buy OSU football tickets!

614-488-9957 • 888-842-5877

ticketsohio@gmail.com

1890 Northwest Blvd., #220, Columbus, OH 43212

WR Tate Shines In Dominant First Quarter

Ohio State quarterback Julian Sayin went to wide receiver Carnell Tate early and often in the Buckeyes' 34-0 victory over Wisconsin on Oct. 18 at Camp Randall Stadium.

GAME NOTEBOOK Sam Cipriani

In the first quarter alone, the junior wideout caught four passes for 85 yards and two touchdowns. Sayin and Tate first linked up for a 15-yard pass on the second play of Ohio State's first possession. Seven plays later, the Buckeyes found themselves backed up with a third-and-11 on Wisconsin's 33-yard line. Sayin then launched a perfect ball to the back of the end zone, which Tate high-pointed between two Badgers defensive backs to secure the 33-yard touchdown reception.

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day broke down Sayin's first touchdown pass to Tate, giving high praise to the Buckeye pass catcher.

"We were running down the field against a coverage that we called 2-Tampa or tricky, and he stuttered on the tricky player. So it was a stutter on him, and then he went by him," Day said. "Then Julian got pushed off his mark and had to slide, so he was a little late getting to him. He threw a good ball, but it was a little bit late, so Carnell had to come back and make a contested catch over the defender's head. I thought that was a really great catch. That's an All-American catch. For him to make a play like that sets the tone."

On the second play of Ohio State's third offensive possession, Sayin hooked up with Tate for a 27-yard catch to push the Buckeyes into Wisconsin territory.

With time ticking down in the first quarter, Ohio State could have run out the clock and headed into the second quarter with a 10-point lead, but Day and the Buckeyes elected to run one more play. Sayin took the snap and found Tate on the side of the end zone for a toe-tap 10-yard touchdown catch.

Tate finished his outing with six receptions for 111 yards and two scores. It marks the Chicago native's second-best outing as a Buckeye. Tate had a career day against Minnesota Oct. 4, catching nine passes for 183 yards and a touchdown in Ohio State's



SONNY BROCKWAY

HARD TO CATCH — Junior receiver Carnell Tate had another big game when Ohio State routed Wisconsin 34-0. He went through two defenders to grab a 33-yard touchdown pass from Julian Sayin and later in the first quarter added a 10-yard TD among his six receptions for 111 yards.

42-3 win over the Golden Gophers.

Day said Tate's persistence and trust in the process have allowed him to finally reap the rewards of his hard work this season.

"It's great to see him have success with the numbers he's getting now because this is a guy that sacrificed a lot in the past, a little bit last year," Day said. "He had to put the work in and maybe not see the numbers and see the results but had faith in the program and stuck in there and believed in the culture, and now you're seeing it pay off for him."

OSU Defense Shuts Down Badgers

Once again, the Buckeye defense was

dominant in Ohio State's shutout against Wisconsin. Ohio State's defense held the Badgers to just 144 yards of total offense – 95 rushing and 49 passing – while holding Wisconsin scoreless.

With Badgers starting running back Dlin Jones going down in the second quarter, Wisconsin was forced to play reserve running back Cade Yacamelli for the majority of the game, and Ohio State made them pay.

Wisconsin rushed for an average of 3.1 yards per carry, and the Badgers recorded less than 15 rushing yards in each of the first three quarters, highlighted by minus-9 allowed in the third. Through 45 minutes of action, Ohio State held Wisconsin to just 11 rushing yards before the Badgers carried the ball for another 84 yards after the Buckeyes had already sealed their victory.

Defensive end Caden Curry said the Buckeyes came into the game understanding Wisconsin's history of having a strong rushing attack, so Ohio State put an emphasis on stopping the run ahead of the contest.

"They are kind of notorious for the run game. They have always had great running backs here in Wisconsin," Curry said. "So we've always just seen them as a great run team, and we wanted to prove a point and stop the run."

He added that the defense is always do-

ing its best to make life easier on the offense, while developing strong habits along the way.

"We're trying to cause havoc on defense," Curry said. "We want to make plays. We want to give good field position for the offense, and getting in the habit now is definitely going to help us later down the road. So just growing that habit is what we're trying to do."

The Buckeyes also forced punts on seven of Wisconsin's nine drives. In the two drives that the Badgers did not punt, linebacker Sonny Styles picked off senior quarterback Hunter Simmons on Wisconsin's second drive of the game, and Ohio State forced a turnover on downs with under a minute left to seal the shutout.

Day pointed out Styles' interception as a vital point in the game, noting it set the tone early and gave the Buckeyes momentum to control the game on both sides of the ball.

"First off, to get the turnover early in the game was tremendous," Day said of the pick that came at the 7:10 mark of the first quarter. "We've seen (Wisconsin) against some really good defenses just run the ball, and we knew we had to stop the run in this game. We put a lot of time into that."

Through Ohio State's first seven games of the season, the Buckeye defense has allowed just 41 points – the best mark in the FBS since 2000.

Day said he liked how Ohio State finished strong, noting that the team's collective energy and commitment to one another reflect the culture the Buckeyes have built and the standards the program continues to uphold each week.

"One of my favorite parts of the game was the way that we ended," Day said, "Guys are on the sideline hoping for a shutout, but guys are screaming and yelling because it's not about the score or the results, it's about the process, and that's it. The guys are playing for each other, and that's another good sign. Hats off to the defense. They did a great job. That doesn't just happen. It's a lot of hard work that gets put in. I give the defense a ton of credit. I give the staff a ton of credit. The defense played their tails off."

Buckeyes Have Some Red-Zone Issues

Ohio State struggled in the red zone early in the season, and it seemed as if the Buckeyes were beginning to overcome those issues against Minnesota. However, for the second straight week, Ohio State was forced to settle for multiple field goals inside the 20-yard line, as Wisconsin managed to halt multiple Buckeye drives.

The Badgers' first stop came on Ohio State's second drive of the contest. With the Buckeyes threatening on third-and-7 from the Wisconsin 20, the Badgers took down Sayin for a rush of no gain, forcing a 38-yard field goal that kicker Jayden Fielding drilled to give Ohio State a 10-point lead.

Three Buckeye drives later, and Ohio State found itself in an identical situation, this time with a third-and-4 at the 20. After the Badgers' senior defensive lineman,

Game Analysis

What Worked Well

Pretty much everything worked for the Buckeye defense in their 34-0 win over Wisconsin on Oct. 18. Not only did the Buckeyes have their second shutout of the season, but they held the Badgers to just 144 total yards, and over half of that yardage came in garbage time in the fourth quarter.

The Buckeyes’ defensive dominance started immediately. The unit forced a three-and-out on the first drive of the game, and after the offense scored a touchdown, senior linebacker Sonny Styles had an interception three plays into the Badgers’ second drive.

Wisconsin didn’t enter Ohio State territory until the second quarter. And even when the Badgers made it to the Buckeye 33-yard line with 9:43 to go before halftime, the Silver Bullets didn’t budge. Instead, sophomore linebacker Arvell Reese took down Wisconsin quarterback Hunter Simmons for a 7-yard sack on first down, and after they only went backward from there, the Badgers had to punt.

The Buckeyes kept Simmons off balance all day. He threw for only 54 yards and completed just 6 of 12 passes.

Ohio State’s run defense wasn’t quite as effective on paper. The unit gave up 95 rushing yards on 31 carries, but 84 of those yards came in the fourth quarter.

What Didn’t Work

There were plenty of things that Ohio State did well in its dominant win over the Badgers, but it simply did not run the ball well. The Buckeyes finished the game with 98 rushing yards, their second-lowest total of the season, on 28 carries (3.5-yard average). The Buckeyes struggled to not only go for explosive plays – their longest run on the day was just a 15-yarder by freshman running back Isaiah West – but they also struggled to avoid negative plays. Ohio State finished the game with four runs that lost yardage.

Freshman running back Bo Jackson had his worst game of the season. He finished the afternoon with only 26 yards on the ground on 10 carries for an average of 2.6 yards per tote.

The Buckeyes’ issues on the ground came up to bite the offense in the red zone and in

short-yardage situations. During one drive in the second quarter, the Buckeyes turned to senior running back CJ Donaldson Jr. on a third-and-2 play from their own 23-yard line. However, Ohio State’s front wasn’t able to move the Badgers, and Donaldson was tackled behind the line of scrimmage for a loss of 1 yard.

Then, to start the second half, Ohio State had another drive derailed by a bad run. The Buckeyes had the ball on Wisconsin’s 17-yard line on second-and-3, but Jackson was stuffed 4 yards behind the line of scrimmage to bring up a third-and-7.

It wasn’t until the fourth quarter that the Buckeyes finally got their running game rolling. During that period, it was West, not Jackson, whom the Buckeyes relied on to run the ball.

For the game, West had nine rushes for a team-high 55 yards, and 24 of those yards came in the fourth quarter.

As a team, Ohio State ran for 32 yards on eight carries in the fourth quarter.

Play Of The Game

The Buckeyes wasted no time taking life out of the Badgers. In the first quarter of its win, Ohio State forced a three-and-out before Sayin started the game 7-of-7 passing, moving the ball into Wisconsin territory.

A negative run by Jackson and a false start penalty backed up the Buckeyes, but Tate made amends for the mix-ups with a 33-yard touchdown reception.

On the third-and-11 play, Sayin had plenty of time to throw after Ohio State’s offensive line picked up Wisconsin’s four-man rush. Sayin needed only to step around Wisconsin linebacker Mason Reiger to have enough time to fire a pass to Tate.

Sayin’s pass was perfect, but two defenders surrounded Tate in the end zone. Tate leapt up and high-pointed the pass. Even when the two Badger defenders tried to break up the pass, he kept control of the ball to give Ohio State a 7-0 advantage.

— Bobby Gorbett

Brandon Lane Jr., broke up Sayin’s pass on third down, Ohio State was yet again forced to kick. However, this time Fielding pushed the 38-yard kick wide right.

On the Buckeyes’ first possession after halftime, Ohio State tailed off an 11-play, 57-yard drive that led to the Wisconsin 26-yard line. However, after Sayin connected with wide receiver Brandon Inniss for an 8-yard gain on third-and-12, setting up Ohio State at Wisconsin’s 18-yard line, the Buckeyes opted to kick a field goal on fourth-and-4 to push their lead to 20.

Day said the Wisconsin defense made Ohio State earn every yard, forcing the Buckeyes to stay disciplined and methodical on offense rather than relying on explosive plays.

“A good defense is going to force you to work the ball down the field like that,” Day said. “They’re not going to let you take long shots. Even when we were trying to take long shots, we could tell they were just backing up. But it’s good for them to feel that, as well. But now, as we throw and catch, you have to be efficient when you’re working the ball down the field. All it takes is one play to be off, and you find yourself off schedule.”

Badgers Slow Down Buckeye Run Game

Despite the Buckeyes recording 491 yards of total offense in their win over the Badgers, Ohio State’s run game simply could not get going.

Ohio State ran for just 98 yards on 28 rushing attempts, as the Buckeyes averaged 3.5 yards a carry between its three ball carriers and Sayin.

Freshman running back Bo Jackson had a rather disappointing outing on the ground against the Badgers. The Cleveland native

carried the ball 10 times for just 26 yards, and he was routinely stuffed for short yardage by the Wisconsin defense.

Jackson’s rushing total has now decreased for the fifth straight game, a far fall from his back-to-back 100-yard performances against Grambling State and Ohio. Although Jackson struggled to run the ball, the freshman added an important five catches for 57 yards receiving, the best receiving day of his young career.

Senior CJ Donaldson Jr. was also rather quiet rushing, with two carries for 12 yards. Like Jackson, he was also successful as a pass catcher. The West Virginia transfer tacked on three catches for 26 yards through the air.

There was one bright spot in an otherwise tough night running the ball for Ohio State.

Freshman running back Isaiah West ran the ball nine times for 55 yards for an average of 6.1 yards per carry. In the win, West had runs of 14 and 15 yards – Ohio State’s two longest runs of the game.

Day said two specific runs stood out to him from West’s performance, noting that he’ll continue to assess both the freshman’s progress and the overall play of the running back unit.

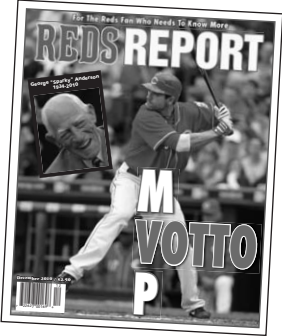
“I have to watch the runs on the coaches’ copy, but on the iPad on the sidelines, I thought two runs were good,” Day said of West. “One (went) for 7, and I forget what the other one was for. He hit them good. There were two guys in the hole that he made miss, so it was a good sign for a young running back.

“Those were good runs, so we’re going to look at everything and do everything we can to make sure we’re efficient and we’re balanced.”

REDS FANS!

Follow The Reds Year-Round In Reds Report

Reds Report is must reading for every Reds fan. Each information-filled issue includes player features; historical articles; extensive minor-league coverage with features on top prospects, complete statistics and farm club updates; box scores and game summaries for every Reds game; complete team and individual statistics; a Reds memorabilia section and much more.



1 Year (12 issues) — \$45.95

Send to: Reds Report • P.O. Box 12453 • Columbus, Ohio 43212

- ☐ Please send me a one-year (12 issues) subscription to **Reds Report** for \$44.95.
- ☐ My check or money order is enclosed. Check # _____
- ☐ Charge to my: ☐ Discover ☐ MC ☐ Visa ☐ AMEX

Exp. Date _____

Card No. _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

For Faster Service On Credit Card Orders Call
1-800-760-2862

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 34, Wisconsin 0

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on redshirt freshman quarterback Julian Sayin being able to learn fast: "When you can just take a meeting to the field as quickly as he can, and then see it, and process it – is he perfect? No, there are things he's going to work to get better at, but, man, he has a bright future ahead of him."

Junior receiver Carnell Tate on when he knew that Sayin would be good: "I knew he was very special when he first got here. He throws a very accurate ball and knows the game of football."

Tate on his 33-yard touchdown reception: "It was just a great ball from Julian for giving me the chance to go up and make the play. There just happened to be two guys up there. I went up there and grabbed the ball."

Tate on why he always catches the ball with his hands rather than his body: "I always learned to catch the ball with my hands, and I'm going to continue to do that week in and week out. We always work on it in practice. (Offensive coordinator Brian) Hartline always preaches it, 'Always catch the ball with your hands and never your body.' "

Day on Tate's performance: "His play speaks for itself. The catch he made early on was tremendous. You see some of those catches he makes on the sidelines. He's a great blocker. He's playing himself into being a first-rounder and an All-American. He's just a different style of player than (sophomore wide receiver Jeremiah Smith), but just as dangerous and just as good. To see someone who has put the dirty work in, and now he's seeing a lot of the balls come his way and seeing a lot of play. The throw and catch on the back-shoulder fade, all of those things are working for him."

Sayin on whether Tate or Smith is



SONNY BROCKWAY

STUFFED — Defensive end Caden Curry wraps up a Wisconsin player, a common occurrence in the 34-0 blowout for Ohio State. The Badgers managed only 144 total yards with a majority coming in the fourth quarter.

more deserving of the Biletnikoff trophy: "It's really tough. We have two guys when it's one-on-one and you're looking at both sides, I have full confidence that both these guys are going to score a touchdown for us. So it's really tough. But we have a great receiver room here, and these guys make some great plays for us."

Junior defensive end Caden Curry on the defense pitching a shutout: "Every week we're going for a shutout. We want to be the best defense in college football. So we definitely don't want them to get

anything. Going out there and doing that is definitely something that was a part of our goals."

Curry on not taking steps back as a unit: "If you play down to the level of your opponent, you are not going to get better. So we're always trying to make ourselves improve, and as Coach Day says, 'we're trying to upgrade every week.' "

Sayin on Ohio State's defense: "It's a very good defense. (Defensive coordinator Matt) Patricia, they do a really good job. They give us some crazy looks, so I think when we go out there on Saturday, we have a lot of confidence going out there prepared because we have seen it all. I was just talking to Coach Patricia in the locker room today about a look that the defense gave us, and he was like, 'I've given you some crazy looks in practice. You're prepared for it all.' "

Wisconsin head coach Luke Fickell in his opening statement: "I'm incredibly disappointed in a lot of things. Obviously, the scoreboard is probably the most notable. Not finding a way to put points on the board will never give us a chance. We know we have to find a way to be able to do that, and we have to get a hell of a lot better at it."

Curry on the unity of Ohio State's defense: "We are all so tight, and we're all so close together, and it's just a bond that we grow every week. And having Coach Patricia in there definitely has helped and kind of just helped us grow it faster. He's definitely brought himself into it, and we'd love to invite him, and he's just somebody that we are kind of bouncing back and forth with."

Fickell on Ohio State: "I'll be honest with you, that is collectively as good a team as I've prepared for or played against in all phases."

chocolate café

FINE CHOCOLATES • COFFEES • DESSERTS • SPIRITS & PEOPLE



1855 Northwest Boulevard
(614) 485-CAFE
chocolatecafecolumbus.com

We can cater your tailgate party!

Parties • Corporate Catering

Weddings • Baby & Bridal Showers • Tailgates!



TOPSOIL

VERY RICH PULVERIZED
OR UNPULVERIZED
"SOIL PLUS"



BLENDED SOIL WITH SAND and ORGANIC COMPOST
RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL
CRUSHED LIMESTONE, WASHED SAND & GRAVEL

ANY SIZE LOAD • IMMEDIATE DELIVERY ANYWHERE

Buy Where the Professionals Do • Delivered on Time - Every Time, It Doesn't Cost Any More!

Columbus' Largest

JONES FUEL COMPANY

350 Frank Road • 443-4611 • 1-800-TOPSOIL
www.jonestopsoil.com

The Numbers Game

Ohio State 34, Wisconsin 0

Oct. 18, 2025 - Camp Randall Stadium, Madison, Wisc.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
OHIO STATE	17	0	10	7	34
WISCONSIN	0	0	0	0	0

First Quarter

OSU - Tate, 33-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 8:25.

OSU - Fielding, 38-yard field goal, 4:40.

OSU - Tate, 10-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 0:04.

Third Quarter

OSU - Fielding, 37-yard field goal, 8:42.

OSU - Kacmarek, 2-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 1:15.

Fourth Quarter

OSU - Inniss, 13-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 5:35.

Att. - 72,795

Weather - Sunny, 72 F

Team Statistics

	OSU	UW
First Downs	26	9
Rushing	6	5
Passing	20	3
Penalty	0	1
Rushes-Yards	28-98	31-95
Passing Yards	393	49
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	36-42-0	7-15-1
Offensive Plays	70	46
Total Net Yards	491	144
Third Down Efficiency	5-11	2-11
Fourth Down Efficiency	2-2	1-2
Punts-Avg.	1-42.0	7-54.1
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	0-0
Penalties	4-25	2-10
Time of Possession	33:57	26:03

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) - **OSU:** West 9-55; Jackson 10-26; Donaldson Jr. 2-12; Sayin 5-7; Team 2-(-2). **UW:** Ituka 4-35; Yacamelli 11-30; West 1-20; Jones 8-14; Anthony II 1-11; O'Neil 3-4; Crowdus 1-(-1); Simmons 2-(-18).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) - **OSU:** Sayin 36-42-0-393-4. **UW:** Simmons 6-12-1-54-0; O'Neil 1-3-0-(-5)-0.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) - **OSU:** Tate 6-111; Smith 9-97; Jackson 5-57; Porter 2-30; Klare 5-29; Inniss 3-26; Donaldson Jr. 3-26; Graham 1-10; Peoples 1-5; Kacmarek 1-2. **UW:** Mason 2-31; McGohan 1-15; Anthony II 1-5; Hilton Jr. 1-5; Jones 1-(-2); Kekahuna 1-(-5).

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) - **OSU:** McGuire 1-42.0-42. **UW:** West 6-56.2-62; Bertrams 1-42.0-42.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - **OSU:** Inniss 3-38. **UW:** None.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - **OSU:** None. **UW:** Yacamelli 1-16.

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

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) - **OSU:** Styles 1-5. **UW:** None.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) - **OSU:** Curry 1-11; Reese 1-7; Jackson Jr. 1-5. **UW:** Agard 1-4.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) - **OSU:** Reese 2-8; Curry 1-11; Jackson Jr. 1-5; Scott Jr. 1-5; Styles 1-2; Delane 1-1. **UW:** Alliegro 2-5; Agard 1-4; Catalano 1-1; Jung 1-1.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) - **OSU:** Downs 6-0-6; Reese 4-0-4; Curry 3-0-3; McDonald 3-0-3; Styles 2-0-2; Delane 2-0-2; Alford 1-1-2; McClain 2-0-2; Pierce 2-0-2; Malone 2-0-2; Scott Jr. 1-0-1; Mathews Jr. 1-0-1; West 1-0-1; Atkinson 1-0-1; Grady 0-1-1; Roker 1-0-1; Rudzinski 1-0-1; Smith Jr. 1-0-1; Houston 1-0-1; Jackson Jr. 1-0-1. **UW:** Catalano 7-1-8; Alliegro 4-2-6; Agard 6-0-6; Jung 3-2-5; Hallman 4-0-4; Curtis 3-0-3; Brown 3-0-3; Cheeks 2-1-3; Latimer 2-0-2; Posa 1-1-2; Peterson 1-1-2; Skanes 1-1-2; Barten 2-0-2; Walker 0-2-2; Clayton 1-0-1; Traynor 1-0-1; Arnett 1-0-1; Reiger 1-0-1; Suggs 1-0-1; Acker 1-0-1; Bortolotti 1-0-1; Witt 0-1-1; Mahlman 0-1-1; Lane Jr. 1-0-1; Petersen 1-0-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME - **OSU:** Sayin, Tate, Jackson, Smith, Montgomery, Siereveld, Daniels, Hinzman, Tshabola, Klare, Kacmarek, Styles, Igbinosun, McClain, Downs, Pierce, Mathews Jr., Reese, Curry, Malone, Jackson Jr., McDonald, Inniss, Delane, Porter, West, Donaldson Jr., Lockhart, Atkinson, Thurman, Grady, Nelson Jr., Alford, Pettijohn, Peoples, Jones, Stover, Roker, Kienholz, West, Lee, Fielding, Velazquez, McGuire, Ferlmann, Rudzinski, Scott Jr., Graham, Mickens, Smith Jr., VanSickle, Sanchez, Padilla, Goines-Jackson, Terry, Moore, Bell, Onianwa, Adolph, Roberts, Christian, Houston. **UW:** Brooks Jr., Simmons, Brunner, Renfro, Jones, Mahlman, Kodanko, Mandell, Anthony II, Stec, Mason, Alliegro, Peterson, Hallman, Reiger, Jung, Suggs, Curtis, Witt, Agard, Barten, Brown, Latimer, Washington, Ituka, Clayton, Traynor, Hilton Jr., Crowdus, Cheeks, Dean, O'Neil, Arnett, Kekahuna, Skanes, Tacamelli, Dunn, Jarvis, Acker, Lane, Ballard, Jansey, Bortolotti, Catalano, Solliday, Levy, Bertrams, Garner, Fearby, Johnson, Cubberly, Posa, Vils, McGohan, Vakos, West, Walker, Lane Jr., Petersen.

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	W, 34-0	72,795
Nov. 1	(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	157	92
Rushing	58	42
Passing	94	40
Penalty	5	10
Average Per Game/Rush	151.7	85.6
Average Per Game/Pass	279.7	131.3
Total Offense	3020	1518
Total Plays	437	398
Average Per Game	431.4	216.9
Average Per Play	6.9	3.8
Penalties-Yards	31-259	29-208
Fumbles-Lost	3-1	5-5
Third Down Efficiency	39-74	19-89
Percentage	53%	21%
Fourth Down Efficiency	6-9	9-20
Percentage	67%	45%
Sacks-Yards	21-136	3-16
Time Of Possession Avg.	32:23	27:37

Score								
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.	
Ohio State	58	62	62	73	0	255	36.4	
Opponents	3	9	16	13	0	41	5.9	

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Bo Jackson	68	433	6.4	2	64
CJ Donaldson Jr.	60	249	4.2	6	27
James Peoples	40	202	5.1	0	33
Isaiah West	21	104	5.0	1	15
Lincoln Kienholz	6	23	3.8	1	8
Jeremiah Smith	2	20	10.0	1	17
Julian Sayin	19	17	0.9	0	12
Carnell Tate	2	16	8.0	0	8
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	9	-20	-2.2	0	0
OSU Totals	232	1062	4.6	12	64
OPP Totals	217	599	2.8	1	34

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Julian Sayin	156	195	80.0	1872	19-3	189.7
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	163	205	79.5	1958	20-3	189.0
OPP Totals	108	181	59.7	919	3-4	103.4

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Jeremiah Smith	49	602	12.3	7	87
Carnell Tate	34	587	17.3	6	49
Max Klare	20	204	10.2	1	29
Brandon Inniss	14	113	8.1	1	13
Bo Jackson	11	114	10.4	1	17
CJ Donaldson Jr.	8	56	7.0	1	14
Will Kacmarek	6	76	12.7	2	47
James Peoples	6	32	5.3	0	10
Jelani Thurman	5	59	11.8	1	26
Quincy Porter	3	45	15.0	0	22
Bennett Christian	2	7	3.5	0	6
Bryson Rodgers	2	22	11.0	0	21
Mylan Graham	2	33	16.5	0	23
David Adolph	1	8	8.0	0	8
OSU Totals	163	1958	12.0	20	87
OPP Totals	108	919	8.5	3	67

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Jayden Fielding	-	29-29	-	-	8-10	53
Jeremiah Smith	8	-	-	-	-	48
CJ Donaldson Jr.	7	-	-	-	-	42
Carnell Tate	6	-	-	-	-	36
Bo Jackson	3	-	-	-	-	18
Will Kacmarek	2	-	-	-	-	12
Max Klare	1	-	-	-	-	6

Brandon Inniss	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	33	33-33	-	-	8-10	255
OPP Totals	4	2-3	-	-	5-7	41

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Jayden Fielding	3-3	5-6	0-0	0-1	8-10
OSU Totals	3-3	5-6	0-0	0-1	8-10
OPP Totals	4-4	0-1	1-2	0-0	5-7

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Joe McGuire	14	574	41.0	0	55
Nick McLarty	1	45	45.0	0	45
OSU Totals	15	619	41.3	0	55
OPP Totals	37	1720	46.5	0	62

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Payton Pierce	1	15	15.0	0	15
J. Mathews Jr.	1	5	5.0	0	5
Sonny Styles	1	5	5.0	0	5
Caleb Downs	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	4	25	6.3	0	15
OPP Totals	3	4	1.3	0	4

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Brandon Inniss	9	112	12.4	0	32
Lorenzo Styles Jr.	1	36	36.0	0	36
Jeremiah Smith	1	-6	-6.0	0	0
OSU Totals	11	142	12.9	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	8	150	18.8	0	41

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Arvell Reese	23	19	42	6.5-31	5.5-30
Sonny Styles	23	16	39	2.5-4	0-0
Caden Curry	23	11	34	10.5-53	7.0-48
Caleb Downs	24	10	34	2.0-2	0-0
Kayden McDonald	16	13	29	6.0-25	3.0-20
Jaylen McClain	21	5	26	0-0	0-0
Davison Igbinosun	14	12	26	0.5-0	0-0
Payton Pierce	9	16	25	1.5-2	0-0
Lorenzo Styles Jr.	10	7	17	1.5-1	0-0
Tywayne Malone	8	5	13	0-0	0-0
J. Mathews Jr.	10	2	12	1.5-7	1.0-6
Will Smith Jr.	5	6	11	0-0	0-0
K. Jackson Jr.	4	5	9	4.5-17	2.5-13
Beau Atkinson	4	5	9	2.5-12	1.0-9
Devin Sanchez	5	2	7	0-0	0-0
Zion Grady	3	3	6	2.0-12	1.0-10
Aaron Scott Jr.	6	-	6	1.0-5	0-0
C.J. Hicks	2	4	6	1.0-1	0-0
Eddrick Houston	1	5	6	0-0	0-0
Riley Pettijohn	2	3	5	0-0	0-0
TJ Alford	2	3	5	1.0-2	0-0
Faheem Delane	4	1	5	1.0-1	0-0
Garrett Stover	4	1	5	0-0	0-0
Bryce West	4	-	4	0-0	0-0
Joshua Mickens	1	2	3	0-0	0-0
Eli Lee	-	2	2	0-0	0-0
Malik Hartford	1	1	2	0-0	0-0
Leroy Roker	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
Dominic Kirks	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
James Peoples	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Jayden Fielding	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Ryan Rudzinski	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	237	166	403	46.0-175	21.0-136
OPP Totals	265	164	429	19.0-37	3.0-16

Fumbles Forced: McDonald (2), Mathews Jr., Pettijohn, Styles.

Fumbles Recovered: Curry, McDonald, Pettijohn, Sanchez, Sitanilei.

Offense Has No Problem Incorporating New Pieces

By **BOBBY GORBETT**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

On the heels of a 2024 season in which the Buckeye roster was loaded with productive starting seniors, the 2025 Ohio State team had holes to fill at several positions. The Buckeyes lost nine contributors from last season's offense. Through six games, there had been very little fall-off in production.

Despite turning to freshman first-year starters Julian Sayin and Bo Jackson at quarterback and running back, respectively, the Buckeyes ranked No. 23 nationally, averaging 36.8 points per game.

Ohio State, led by offensive coordinator and first-time play-caller Brian Hartline, couldn't have asked for tougher competition in Week 1. In its 14-7 win over No. 1-ranked Texas, Ohio State wasn't necessarily awe-inspiring on offense, but it didn't need to be. The defense had Texas quarterback Arch Manning in a funk and didn't allow a score until the fourth quarter. The proficiency of the Silver Bullets certainly took some pressure off Hartline and the offense, which totaled only 203 yards but kept the ball out of harm's way.

Through six games, the Buckeyes had gone for an average of 421.5 yards per game, which ranked just 45th in the country and was just less than the 429.4 yards per game they averaged last season. Ohio State's relative lack of production compared to some of the top offenses can be partially attributed to its slow pace. Its 61.2 offensive plays per game ranked among the lowest in the country. Also, their opponents have often attempted to hold the ball for as long as possible.

"The first goal is to win," head coach Ryan Day said when asked about the offense's tempo, "and when you look at it from that point of view, you do everything you can to win that game, but then you take a step back and figure what gives us the best chance to reach our goals, that's the way we look at it."

With that in mind, BSB graded each offensive position at the midway point of the regular season. The grades do not include performances from the 34-0 win over Wisconsin on Oct. 18.

Quarterbacks

Perhaps Ohio State's biggest offensive question mark in the preseason was at quarterback. After starter Will Howard departed the Buckeyes to the NFL and backups Devin Brown and Air Noland left via the transfer portal, Ohio State was left with only young options Lincoln Kienholz and Julian Sayin. As talented as Sayin and Kienholz are, the two quarterbacks had combined for zero starts and seven appearances heading into this season.

After a position battle that lasted until midway through fall camp, Sayin, a five-star recruit and redshirt freshman, won the job.

Through six games, Sayin had looked more like a seasoned veteran than a first-year starter. He had thrown for 1,479 yards and 15 touchdowns against three interceptions, and his 78.4 percent completion percentage ranked No. 1 in the country among

Rating The Offense

Here is where the OSU offense ranked among the Big Ten and nationally (statistics through the Illinois game).

Category	Stats	NCAA	Big Ten
Rushing Offense	160.7	63rd	10th
Passing Offense	260.8	42nd	8th
Total Offense	421.5	45th	7th
Scoring Offense	36.8	23rd	6th
Turnovers Lost	4	T-12th	T-6th
Third-Down Conv.	.540	10th	4th

quarterbacks who had played in at least 75 percent of their team's games and had attempted at least 15 passes per game. His 86.5 quarterback rating was also the fourth-best mark in the country. The Carlsbad, Calif., native withstood a tricky season-opening test against Texas, completing 13 of 20 passes for 126 yards and a touchdown. Although his numbers weren't necessarily flashy against the loaded Longhorns' defense, Sayin didn't turn the ball over, which, according to Day, was significant.

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

Sayin was let loose in the team's win over Grambling, and in just one half, he threw for 306 yards and four touchdowns while completing 18 of 19 passes. Then, in the Buckeyes' 37-9 win over the Bobcats the next week, he showed he could beat defenses over the top. In that game, Sayin connected with star receivers Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate for a combined three completions of at least 40 yards.

However, it was during that period that Sayin made some freshman mistakes. He threw a pass on the goal line late and behind Tate that led to an interception against Grambling State, and against the Bobcats, he threw two more interceptions.

Sayin's growing pains at the end of the Buckeyes' nonconference slate made it not surprising that Hartline again took a conservative approach with him in the team's 24-6 win over Washington. In that game, Sayin attempted only 28 passes, and his longest completion was a 19-yarder to Smith. Still, Sayin was efficient in taking what the Huskies' defense gave him, and he completed 22 passes for 208 yards and two touchdowns.

When Minnesota was a bit more aggressive defensively the next week, Sayin had a career-best performance. He completed 23 of 27 passes for 326 yards and three touchdowns and once again had three completions of over 40 yards.

"You're seeing Julian grow each week," Day said after Sayin's performance against the Golden Gophers. "You're seeing his teammates believe in him more and more. He's taken more command. It's important for any quarterback to understand what he's surrounded by, both sides of the ball, all three phases, and know what we need to do to win the game."

"He has great poise, even in the huddle,"



SONNY BROCKWAY

GOOD START — Freshman Bo Jackson has become the go-to back for the Buckeyes, leading the team through the first six games with 407 yards on 58 carries for a 7.0 average.

senior tight end Max Klare said of Sayin. "The way he plays is pretty awesome for a redshirt freshman. It's great to see that. He's just going to keep building on it, too, so it's going to be fun to watch."

Kienholz had received limited playing time as the Buckeyes' backup but looked good when he was on the field. Kienholz had completed 7 of 8 passes for 86 yards and a touchdown. He had been used occasionally as a runner in short-yardage situations as well, gaining 23 yards on six carries and running for a touchdown in the Buckeyes' 42-3 win over Minnesota.

BSB Midterm Grade: A-

Running Backs

If Ohio State left anything to be desired in its 6-0 start, it had been on the ground. The Buckeyes ranked No. 63 in the country this season, rushing for 160.7 yards per game. Once again, that number is slightly deflated because of the offense's slow tempo, but it was far from a perfect start for Ohio State's running backs. If it weren't for the emergence of Jackson, the Buckeyes might have had a serious problem on their hands.

With 407 rushing yards on 58 carries (7.0 yards per carry), Jackson had not only been Ohio State's leading rusher, but also the most efficient runner in the room.

He got off to an ideal start, rushing for 217 yards on 18 carries in Ohio State's wins

over Grambling State and Ohio, but a portion of that yardage came during the second half of those games when the outmatched opponents were beginning to rotate defensively.

Still, Jackson showed he could go for big runs, something other runners in the room struggled to do. Against Grambling and Ohio, Jackson had two runs that went for more than 50 yards.

He hadn't been quite as explosive in Big Ten play, but he had still been the Buckeyes' most reliable runner. Jackson rushed for 190 yards and a touchdown on 40 carries (4.8-yard average) in the first three conference games. He got banged up in the Buckeyes' 34-16 win over Illinois, limiting his production. He went for 47 yards on 10 carries before being taken out of the game in the third quarter.

After the game, Day said Jackson was fine and probably would have remained in the game if it were a bit closer.

After Ohio State's win over Minnesota, Day said that as good as Jackson has been, he has an even higher ceiling.

"We're all excited about Bo," Day said. "His teammates see it, we see it, but he is still a freshman, so it's our job to make sure that we're bringing him along the right way and that we're recognizing his ability to sustain a certain level of play for the entire year. But the talent is there, the work ethic is there, the way he practices is indicative

of how he’s playing in the game. I still think there’s a huge ceiling here, and the more he plays, the better he’s going to get.”

Jackson’s talent isn’t the only reason that he’s solidified himself as Ohio State’s primary running back. The season-opening starters, sophomore James Peoples and senior CJ Donaldson Jr., have had disappointing starts to the season.

Although Peoples’ 202 rushing yards on 40 carries might look good on paper, he had struggled to find any consistency against Power Four opponents. In four games against Power Four foes, Peoples had gone for 96 yards on 25 carries (3.8-yard average), and 56 of those yards came in the fourth quarter of the Buckeyes’ blowout of Minnesota.

Peoples had also seen his usage go down since the start of the season. He carried the ball 25 times in the Buckeyes’ first three games, and in the next three, he logged 15 carries.

Donaldson had been a bit more effective than Peoples. The former West Virginia transfer went for 237 rushing yards and a team-high six touchdowns on 58 carries. Often used in short-yardage situations, Donaldson hadn’t really shown the playmaking ability to hit big runs against Big Ten opponents. His longest run in conference play was an 11-yarder against Washington, but his six rushing touchdowns, as well as a red-zone receiving score, show he had done his job when his number was called near the goal line.

All three running backs in Ohio State’s rotation had made some impact in the passing game. Jackson was the leading receiver in the room with 57 receiving yards and a touchdown on six catches.

Freshman running back Isaiah West had also received limited playing time. Playing in only three games, West ran for 49 yards and a touchdown on 12 carries.

BSB Midterm Grade: B-

Wide Receivers

It should come as no surprise to Buckeye fans, or anyone aware of the abilities of Hartline as the leader of the wide receiver room, that Ohio State’s pass-catchers are once again a huge part of the offense’s success. While the stats of the Buckeye receivers may not be as eye-popping as they have been in years past, Smith and Tate have done everything asked of them.

Despite being the center of every opposing defense’s attention, Smith led Ohio State through six games with 40 catches, 505 receiving yards and seven touchdowns. His seven scores were also tied for the second most in the country.

After a slightly quiet performance against Texas, Smith reminded the college football world why he’s regarded by many as the best offensive player in the sport in games against Grambling State and Ohio.

In those games, Smith combined for 14 catches, 272 yards and three touchdowns. Big Ten defenses have opted to make other Ohio State players beat them and haven’t allowed Smith to go for 100 yards in a single Big Ten game, but he still had at least one receiving touchdown in each of the Buckeyes’ first three conference games.

Tate had been the main beneficiary of the attention Smith commands. Tate hauled in 28 passes for 476 receiving yards and four touchdowns in the first half of the regular

season.

After a quiet three-catch performance against Washington, Tate had a career-best game against Minnesota. He went for nine catches for 183 yards and a touchdown. Tate’s touchdown in that game came when Smith went in motion before the play and had five Golden Gopher defenders closely watching him. That set Tate up to be single-covered by a Minnesota defender, and he surged by him to haul in the 44-yard score.

“I think they both learn from each other,” Day said. “What I mean by that is Carnell was here first. There are a lot of things that I’m sure Jeremiah learned from Carnell, just about day-to-day and the fact that there are just days where one guy is getting a lot of touches, the other guy maybe isn’t, and then vice versa.”

Alongside Smith and Tate in the slot is junior receiver Brandon Inniss. He hadn’t been as productive as the two standout outside receivers, but few pass-catchers have been this year. At a slot position that the Buckeyes have used well under Day, Inniss hadn’t managed to make a huge impact.

The junior receiver had 11 receptions for 87 yards halfway through the season. Despite being a starter for the first time, Inniss wasn’t on pace to improve his numbers much from last season (14 catches, 176 yards) when he was the team’s fourth-string receiver.

Often the first guy to go to the bench when the offense uses two tight ends, Inniss hasn’t played as much as Smith and Tate despite being a starter.

The Buckeyes haven’t relied on backup receivers as much as they usually do. Backups David Adolph, Mylan Graham, Quincy Porter and Bryson Rodgers had all gotten on the field, but none of them had made more than two catches.

BSB Midterm Grade: A

Tight Ends

Ohio State relied heavily in the first half on its depth at tight end. The Buckeyes showed a willingness to use multiple tight ends pretty much anywhere on the field, and closer to the goal line, they put as many as four tight ends on the field on a given play. Klare had been the most productive in the passing game. He had 175 receiving yards and a touchdown on 15 receptions.

The former Boilermaker overcame a slow start to the season to be a reliable pass-catcher against Big Ten foes.

In back-to-back games against Minnesota and Illinois, Klare went for 63 receiving yards on five catches and 38 receiving yards on four catches.

Despite not being known for his blocking prowess, Klare improved in that regard as well and helped spring a nice run for Donaldson in the Washington game.

Although Klare has been the most productive receiving threat at tight end, it was former Ohio transfer Will Kacmarek who was receiving the most playing time. Widely regarded as one of the better blocking tight ends in the country, Kacmarek led the tight end room in snaps in four of the Buckeyes’ six games.

Kacmarek had five catches for 74 yards and a touchdown. The senior, who has been reliable throughout the season as a run-blocker, made arguably his biggest play as a pass protector. In the game against Texas, he helped Sayin complete a 40-yard

touchdown when he laid a good block on star pass rusher Colin Simmons.

Ohio State has also put senior tight end Bennett Christian and junior tight end Jelani Thurman on the field. While Christian had been used more for his run-blocking, Thurman has been a threat as a pass-catcher. Through six games, Thurman had already gone for a career-high five catches for 59 yards and a touchdown.

Freshman tight end Nate Roberts has also made an impact, mostly at fullback. He had a carry for 1 yard against Illinois to gain a first down in the red zone.

“I think we’re deep,” Kacmarek said of the tight ends. “You could throw any one of us out there, and we know what we’re doing. We could get the job done. There are some areas where some tight ends are more capable than others in the room, but at the end of the day, we could all get the job done, and we all have something special about us.”

BSB Midterm Grade: B

Offensive Line

Coming into the year, the Buckeyes’ offensive line was predicted to be a strength for the offense. Midway through the season, that had been the case. Ohio State was tied for second nationally, allowing only 0.33 sacks per game. They hadn’t been as dominant in the run game, but according to Day, that hadn’t been due to a lack of physicality.

“There’s been some positive things across the board, and then there’s some things we need to get better at, but I think the guys are playing physical,” Day said of Ohio State’s run game. “I think that there’s

been some really positive things that we’ve done this year. But as we know, we want to perfect it. And I think once you get half-way through the season, you recognize the things that your guys can do well. And I think we have to continually work on the things that we think fit our guys the best.”

Ohio State’s starting offensive line includes left tackle Austin Siereveld, left guard Luke Montgomery, center Carson Hinzman, right guard Tegra Tshabola and right tackle Phillip Daniels.

Siereveld was one of the Buckeyes’ highest-graded offensive linemen in every game they’ve played so far this season. With a Pro Football Focus grade of 75.8, Siereveld was the third-highest graded Buckeye in the team’s win over Washington. Then, against Minnesota, he received a grade of 82.8, making him by far the highest-graded Buckeye offensive lineman.

Contrarily, Tshabola had often been graded as one of the worst offensive linemen, which can explain why the Buckeyes have been opting to rotate him with sophomore guard Josh Padilla recently and Ethan Onianwa early in the season.

Padilla played 14 snaps against the Fighting Illini and was Ohio State’s highest-graded offensive lineman.

“He’s graded out. He did a nice job,” Day said of Padilla’s performance against Illinois. “As he continues to grade the way he does, he’s a center/guard for us. And when we can do that, again, it’s a strength of ours if we have depth. And he’s giving us some of that.”

BSB Midterm Grade: B+

CAMERON'S AMERICAN BISTRO | CAP CITY FINE DINER & BAR | MARTINI MODERN ITALIAN
VALENTINA'S RISTORANTE, BAR, PIZZERIA | THE BARN AT ROCKY FORK CREEK | CENTO ITALIANO
HUDSON 29 KITCHEN + DRINK | DEL MAR | BUTCHER & ROSE | THE GUILD HOUSE
MARCELLA'S | MOLLY WOO'S ASIAN BISTRO | THE PEARL RESTAURANT, TAVERN & OYSTER ROOM
THE AVENUE STEAK TAVERN | BUDD DAIRY FOOD HALL | MITCHELL'S OCEAN CLUB
SOCAL KITCHEN AND BAR | LINCOLN SOCIAL ROOFTOP | CAMERON MITCHELL PREMIER EVENTS
CAMERON'S AMERICAN BISTRO | CAP CITY FINE DINER & BAR | MARTINI MODERN ITALIAN
VALENTINA'S RISTORANTE, BAR, PIZZERIA | THE BARN AT ROCKY FORK CREEK | CENTO ITALIANO
HUDSON 29 KITCHEN + DRINK | DEL MAR | BUTCHER & ROSE | THE GUILD HOUSE
MARCELLA'S | MOLLY WOO'S ASIAN BISTRO | THE PEARL RESTAURANT, TAVERN & OYSTER ROOM
THE AVENUE STEAK TAVERN | BUDD DAIRY FOOD HALL | MITCHELL'S OCEAN CLUB
SOCAL KITCHEN AND BAR | LINCOLN SOCIAL ROOFTOP | CAMERON MITCHELL PREMIER EVENTS
CAMERON'S AMERICAN BISTRO | CAP CITY FINE DINER & BAR | MARTINI MODERN ITALIAN
VALENTINA'S RISTORANTE, BAR, PIZZERIA | THE BARN AT ROCKY FORK CREEK | CENTO ITALIANO
HUDSON 29 KITCHEN + DRINK | DEL MAR | BUTCHER & ROSE | THE GUILD HOUSE
MARCELLA'S | MOLLY WOO'S ASIAN BISTRO | THE PEARL RESTAURANT, TAVERN & OYSTER ROOM
THE AVENUE STEAK TAVERN | BUDD DAIRY FOOD HALL | MITCHELL'S OCEAN CLUB
SOCAL KITCHEN AND BAR | LINCOLN SOCIAL ROOFTOP | CAMERON MITCHELL PREMIER EVENTS

WE LOVE
COLUMBUS!
*The Best Hometown
in the Land!*

CAMERONMITCHELL

▪ R E S T A U R A N T S ▪

View locations and reserve online: CameronMitchell.com

BuckeyeSports.com

Nov. 1, 2025 BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN • 17

Linebackers Shine In Talented OSU Defense

By **SAM CIPRIANI**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Following the 2024 season, Ohio State lost eight of its 11 defensive starters to the NFL draft and its defensive coordinator, Jim Knowles, to rival Penn State. Many thought the “Silver Bullets” would take a major hit in talent and production.

While Ohio State did lose a significant portion of its contributors from a season ago, from a statistical standpoint, it had managed to seemingly improve in 2025 upon a campaign in which it was one of the nation’s top-ranked defenses.

Through the first six games, which included two opponents outside of the Power Four, the 2025 Buckeye defense was statistically better than the 2024 unit (full season stats) in total defense (229.0 yards allowed per game in 2025, 254.6 in 2024), scoring defense (6.8 points per game to 12.9), rush yards allowed (84.0 to 87.6) and pass yards allowed (145.0 to 167.0). The great start begins with first-year defensive coordinator Matt Patricia.

Patricia’s ever-changing scheme, chock full of disguised coverages and NFL experience, has allowed him to thrive at the college level. With safety Caleb Downs, linebacker Sonny Styles and cornerback Davison Igbinosun as the only returning starters, Patricia managed to transform his new defense into arguably the nation’s single most game-changing unit, allowing just four touchdowns in the first half of the season.

Ohio State had also been the nation’s best red-zone defense through the first half of the season. The Buckeyes did not allow a touchdown inside the red zone until midway through the third quarter against Illinois, marking just over 330 minutes that Ohio State didn’t allow a score from inside the 20.

Bearing that in mind, BSB broke down and rated each of Ohio State’s four position units on defense, not including their performances in the 34-0 win over Wisconsin on Oct. 18.



TIM SWANSON
Certified Personal Trainer

Flat Stomach • Weight Loss • Strength Training • Cardio Kick-Boxing • Boot Camp

614-886-9331
foreverfitswan@yahoo.com

Rating The Defense

Here is where the OSU defense ranked among the Big Ten and nationally (statistics through the Illinois game).

Category	Stats	NCAA	Big Ten
Rushing Defense	84.0	9th	3rd
Passing Defense	145.0	7th	4th
Total Defense	229.0	T-4th	T-1st
Scoring Defense	6.8	1st	1st
Sacks/Game	3.0	T-14th	4th
Third-Down Def.	.218	2nd	1st

Defensive Line

Ohio State’s defensive line was the position group that took the biggest hit of players leaving. All four starters on its 2024 national championship team were drafted, forcing a group of new contributors to step into bigger roles.

On the edge, Caden Curry and Kenyatta Jackson Jr. had anchored the outside of Ohio State’s D-line, with North Carolina transfer Beau Atkinson trailing close behind. Curry had been the best of the bunch through six games, ranking third on the team with 31 total tackles.

He was also tied for sixth nationally with a whopping 9½ TFLs and was tied for eighth in the nation with six sacks.

Day said Curry’s decision to stay patient through three years as a backup, along with his hard work and resilience, paved the way for his success at Ohio State this season.

“He stuck with it,” Day said. “And as we all know, that’s a huge part of having success in this game, resilience. Caden’s a great example of somebody that has put the hard work in. Now you’re seeing him play at a very high level. And the production is significant.”

Jackson, dealing with two separate in-game injuries, had a slow start to the season. He had accumulated just eight tackles, with 3½ TFLs and 1½ sacks.

Many expected Jackson to emerge as Ohio State’s top defensive-line contributor. At Big Ten media days in July, Styles spoke highly of him, believing he possesses both the physical tools and mental toughness needed to excel.

“Kenyatta Jackson has done a very good job (as a leader).” Styles said. “I’m really excited for him. He’s going to have a huge year. He’s a great dude who does things the right way every day. He holds everyone accountable, including me. He obviously has all the tools it takes to be a monster, so I’m very excited for him.”

In relief of Curry and Jackson, Atkinson had put up eight tackles, 2½ TFLs and one sack on the season.

Senior defensive end C.J. Hicks was originally in line to be one of the Buckeyes’ two backup ends, but after just 50 snaps in four games, recording six tackles, he is reportedly considering redshirting this season.

With Hicks possibly out of the lineup, four-star recruit Zion Grady had stepped into his role. He was off to a solid start in three games, earning 10 and 13 snaps in the Buckeyes’ two games against Minnesota and Illinois, respectively. He had recorded two TFLs and a sack.

At defensive tackle, junior Kayden McDonald had been as advertised for the Buckeyes. After playing in all 16 games last season as a rotational piece, McDonald had six TFLs and three sacks for Ohio State in the first half of



FILE PHOTO

STYLISH — Senior Sonny Styles (0) has teamed with junior Arvell Reese to form what could be the best linebacker duo in college football. Styles, one of four captains and wearer of the prestigious Block “O” jersey, had a game-best 10 tackles against Illinois earlier this season.

this season. He totaled 26 tackles, two forced fumbles and a fumble recovery – including a fumble he stripped and recovered by himself in the Buckeyes’ win over the Illini.

The Buckeyes’ second defensive tackle position was perhaps the biggest question on the defense. Sophomore Eddrick Houston opened the year as the starter, but after two games, senior Tywone Malone Jr. took over at the three-tech spot.

While Houston, who recorded five tackles through six games, had faltered, Malone was just beginning to surge. The former two-sport athlete at Ole Miss racked up 11 tackles (six solo) and a pass breakup.

Day said Malone is only just getting started, adding that he’s seeing improvement in play and effort every week.

“I think his confidence is as high as it’s ever been,” Day said. “He had some great plays, great effort plays. He’s thriving right now in this defense, and you’re seeing some bounce in his step. He’s getting better each week.”

Rounding out the unit were redshirt sophomore Will Smith Jr. and freshman Jarquez Carter. Both had been impactful for Ohio State in limited playing time but had seen increased time in each of the Buckeyes’ last three contests.

All things considered, despite replacing the entire unit, Ohio State’s defensive line had exceeded expectations, providing a strong foundation that relieved pressure on the Buckeye linebackers and secondary.

BSB Midterm Grade: B+

Linebackers

The 2025 Ohio State linebacker unit may be the best individual position group in all of college football. The combination of Styles and Arvell Reese had been a lethal duo for the Buckeyes through the first six games. With Styles listed at 6-5, 243 pounds and Reese at 6-4, 243, the pair is not only one of the biggest linebacker tandems in the country, but possibly the most athletic.

Styles, one of Ohio State’s four captains, has been a leader for the Buckeyes on and off the field. The senior was second on the Buckeyes in total tackles (37) to Reese (38) and led the team with 21 solo takedowns. Styles had also notched 1½ TFLs and forced a fumble against Ohio on Sept. 13. Styles was a safety coming out of Pickerington (Ohio) Central and played in the secondary in his first two years with the program, but he has since made a major impact after his switch to linebacker for the 2024 season.

Day highlighted the linebacker’s maturity and intelligence as what makes Styles so effective leading on and off the field, adding that his presence rubs off on his teammates on a daily basis.

“Sonny is a grown man,” Day said. “The way he handles his business, the way he plays, the way he leads, the way he communicates – it’s like having a coach out there, and I think he’s had a big part of the maturity of

our defense every day. They watch the way he works. If he doesn't like something, he calls it out. And he's a big part of the reason why our defense has had success so far to this point."

With Styles leading, the Buckeyes had found stability and flexibility across all levels of their defense. His ability to shift between Mike and Will linebacker, with a background in coverage as a former safety, helped elevate the unit's play. Styles did just that in Ohio State's 34-16 victory over No. 17 Illinois on Oct. 11 with a team-high 10 total tackles in the Buckeyes' win, with both him and Reese recording eight solo tackles on the afternoon.

Reese, on the other hand, acts as the more explosive of the two backers. The junior's ability to accelerate off the snap lined up as an edge rusher and versatility in coverage give Day and Patricia another jack-of-all-trades to man the middle of the field. Along with his 38 tackles (19 solo), Reese added 4½ sacks as well as two pass breakups.

"I feel like at linebacker, you have to have a mindset that you know you want to make every tackle," Reese said. "So that's just like the mindset that I have going out there, just I want to be at least near every tackle."

Both Reese and Styles had done just that, as coaches raved about how the two explode out of snaps.

Day highlighted the duo's versatility, adding that it gives him and Patricia the defensive chess pieces to move around to confuse opposing offenses.

"Those two guys in particular that you mentioned both have versatility," Day said. "You look at Arvell, you look at Sonny, and you see guys who can do multiple things. Then it becomes harder to recognize exactly how you're being attacked."

Reese said that despite having slightly different strengths, the pair works well together as a cohesive unit.

"I think we complement each other well," Reese said. "We can do a lot of the same stuff. There's not really too much that I could do that Sonny can't."

Backing up the dominant duo were sophomore Payton Pierce and freshman Riley Pettijohn. Though Pierce had seen significantly more playing time than the promising rookie Pettijohn, both had made an impact rotating in as second-stringers.

While the five-star Pettijohn acted more as a true reserve, Pierce solidified himself as the bona fide third linebacker, with 23 total tackles and one of the Buckeyes' three interceptions on the year on a tipped ball by cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. in Ohio State's win over Illinois.

Pettijohn had also made multiple impact plays, particularly in the Buckeyes' 70-point thrashing of Grambling State, when he recovered a fumble forced by McDonald, scooping up the football for a 23-yard score. He also punched out a ball of his own for a forced fumble recovered by defensive lineman Epi Sitanilei.

Overall, with Styles and Reese forming likely the most formidable linebacker two-some in the country, as well as two promising backups in Pierce and Pettijohn making their mark in limited time, Ohio State's room is both talented and deep. Within a stacked defense, the Buckeye linebacker corps stands as the glue that holds the Silver Bullets together.

BSB Midterm Grade: A+

Cornerbacks

Ohio State's cornerback room boasts a

wealth of talent, with players who saw action in 2024 now finally hitting their stride this season. When the Buckeyes are fully healthy, Igbinosun and Mathews have started on the outside for the Buckeyes.

Igbinosun started in all 16 games on Ohio State's run to the national championship last season, and though he was solid overall, the product of Union, N.J., was flagged 16 times. In 2025, however, the senior cornerback has dramatically decreased his penalties. He was flagged in the game against Illinois on Oct. 11, but Igbinosun recorded four pass breakups, putting him atop the Buckeyes' season leaderboard in that category with five in six games.

After a strong 2024 campaign when he rotated in for former Buckeye cornerback Denzel Burke, Mathews has broken out this year. He tallied just 11 tackles, but he had been all over the field for the Buckeyes. He's racked up 1½ TFLs, one sack, one interception, a forced fumble and three breakups. Mathews' last breakup resulted in the football being tipped in the air and intercepted by Pierce.

Mathews' versatility was also showcased in full form when the cornerback moved to the nickel against Illinois in the absence of Lorenzo Styles Jr., churning out one of his best performances of the year.

Igbinosun had high praise for Mathews after the win.

"Jermaine is that boy," Igbinosun said. "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."

As the nickel cornerback, Lorenzo Styles started five out of Ohio State's first six games and was solid as the Buckeyes' third corner. He racked up 17 tackles, tallied 1½ TFLs and broke up a pass. Though Styles struggled at times early in the season, it seemed he was trending in the right direction, both with his play and a return from injury.

With Styles out with an injury against Illinois, freshman Devin Sanchez stepped in for his first career start, recording five tackles and a pass breakup. The freshman made appearances in all six of Ohio State's games and was impressive early. Sanchez had seven tackles on the year and recovered a fumble against Ohio in Week 3.

The Buckeye cornerbacks hadn't stifled opposing offenses. They were also, in Day's view, the driving force behind Ohio State's energy and motivation.

Day said that the energy in the cornerback room is contagious, adding that their swagger, particularly that of Igbinosun and Mathews, gives him confidence in their play.

"We're always on the same page, and just the energy just shows off with that," McClain said. "I feel like when you have corners that have energy like that, it feeds off into people like me and Caleb. Well, me and Caleb obviously have energy as well, but with their type of energy, the swag they play with helps them play. It helps put confidence in me that they're going to play."

With that being said, despite a few bad penalties and the rare missed tackle, Ohio State's cornerback group had been lockdown for the most part, blanketing teams to under 150 passing yards per game.

BSB Midterm Grade: A-

Safeties

With arguably the best defensive player in all of college football in Downs leading the unit, Ohio State's safety group is once again as strong as ever.

Downs had, yet again, been one of the Buckeyes' key contributors on and off the field. The junior was fourth on the Buckeyes with 28 tackles that included a nine-tackle outburst against Illinois. Downs had added two TFLs on the season and an interception against Grambling State on Sept. 6 when he lined up on the defense line and exploded into the air for the pick.

Downs' versatility allowed Patricia to move the safety as he pleased, with a diverse skill set allowing the Hoschton, Ga., native to find success in multiple roles on the field.

Day said that Downs is almost the conductor of the defense, orchestrating the unit with his communication and talent to keep everyone aligned both on and off the field.

"Caleb is kind of the man that makes it all happen, and we all see what Caleb does on the field, but a big part of the success that we have is Caleb's presence off the field and communicating and getting everybody on the same page and building confidence around him," Day said. "That's probably one of the things that maybe has gone unrecognized a little bit."

Day added that Downs' presence as a leader had been invaluable, noting his ability to inspire confidence within the defense, which set him apart as one of the nation's premier defensive players.

"When you take somebody like Caleb, who can lead and can communicate and can build confidence with the guys around them, those are all the things that you don't see," Day said. "And to me, that's why Caleb is such a special player and is the best defensive player in the country, especially in the secondary."

Alongside Downs is strong safety Jaylen McClain, who emerged as Ohio State's No. 2 safety during fall camp. McClain started in all six games on his way to 24 tackles and a pass breakup. Although McClain had yet to elevate his play to the level of Downs and former strong safety Lathan Ransom, he had bounced back from rookie mistakes.

Downs had high praise for his running mate, believing that McClain had matured as a player and as a leader of the defense despite being in his first year as a starter.

"He's grown up," Downs said. "He's a really good communicator. He puts himself in a lot of good positions. He's made a lot of plays. I think he's taken a real leadership role and shows the way for the young guys to watch how he's grown and how he's progressed as a player. Then he's made himself somebody that you can look to and say, 'I want to be like him.'"

With Downs and McClain holding down the deep secondary, Ohio State had given up just two touchdowns of 20-plus yards.

Junior Malik Hartford had been in competition for the Buckeyes' starting strong safety spot with McClain, but the sophomore won the job and quickly pushed Hartford out of contention for snaps.

With Hartford likely out, also possibly redshirting alongside Hicks, freshman Faheem Delane and sophomore Leroy Roker III are expected to back Downs and McClain. Delane was the No. 55 overall recruit in the class of 2025 and had played well in 38 snaps, totaling three tackles. Roker had earned just 22 reps and recorded one takedown.

BSB Midterm Grade: A-



Special Teams Still Inconsistent For Buckeyes

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

There haven't been many problems for the Ohio State football team this season. The Buckeyes are ranked No. 1 in the country and have been since after their Week 1 win over Texas, so it's hard to pick out any major weaknesses.

But even as the Buckeyes are the best team in the country in many other areas, they still can't figure out how to get to that level with their special teams.

They have no special teams coordinator as they did for the 2021-23 seasons, with Parker Fleming heading that operation. But even with most coaches participating in special teams preparations, many of the same problems persist.

After having some of those issues in Ohio State's fourth game this season against Washington, head coach Ryan Day explained who does what when it comes to special teams.

"(Quality control coach) Rob Keys heads it up," Day said. "He does punt return. He's sort of the point man there. And then each position is coached up by somebody individually. Then on punt, (safeties coach) Matt Guerrieri heads that up, again, with a lot of help from different folks. I'm involved with it all. Kickoff return, (quality control coach) Nate Ebner game plans that. He gets up in front of the group and coaches that, again, with a lot of help. And then (linebackers coach) James Laurinaitis does the kickoff.

"(Offensive line coach) Tyler Bowen does the field goal. And then on defense, everybody's involved. But (quality control coach) Sam McGrath really helps with that."

Day said that there are a few people on the team who are exempt from participating in special teams – the quarterbacks, linemen and coordinators – but he made sure to point out that everyone else, including himself, is involved and trying to make the unit better.

"We have multiple coaches up in front of the group, which I think is good for our team," Day said. "It's a different voice. It's a different attack. But it's also accountability for everybody. We're all involved with special teams."

The Buckeyes have seemingly made some small improvements in some areas in the first six games of the season. Here are Buckeye Sports Bulletin's grades for Ohio State special teams through the first six games of the season. The 34-0 win over Wisconsin is not included in midterm grades.

Kicking Game

Jayden Fielding is now in his last season at Ohio State, and the Buckeyes also brought in transfer Jackson Courville over the offseason.

Fielding made 6 of 7 field-goal attempts (85.7 percent) through six games, the only miss coming against Minnesota when Day decided to try out a 53-yarder to see if the kicker had the leg for it.

The kick missed wide left, and Fielding's career-long remains a 47-yarder that he made in 2023. The last time the Buckeyes made a 50-plus-yard field goal was in 2019 at Northwestern when Blake Haubeil nailed a 55-yard kick against the Wildcats.

Rating The Specialists

Here is where the OSU specialists ranked among the Big Ten and nationally (statistics through the Illinois game).

Category	Stats	NCAA	Big Ten
Net Punting	39.6	T-66th	9th
Punt Return Avg.	13.0	23rd	8th
KO Return Avg.	19.0	T-84th	12th
Punt Return Def.	3.0	T-24th	5th
KO Return Def.	19.1	62nd	9th

Day said he wanted to test Fielding out in a game when he felt comfortable the Buckeyes were going to be able to win, because a game later down the road could come down to a long kick.

Fielding said he tried out a 63-yard field goal in practice on Oct. 1 and noted that he "had the leg" but missed wide left. But the fact that he hasn't been able to make a 50-plus yarder in his college career in a



Jayden Fielding

game could be due to Ohio Stadium being a tough place to kick field goals, according to Fielding.

"I wouldn't say it's easy to kick in the 'Shoe," he said. "There's a bunch of wind factors and stuff like that. It's one of the tougher stadiums to

kick in, I would say, in the Big Ten.

"The wind will swirl, especially with that closed end and the two openings on the South end of the stadium flows wind into there. I pay attention to the wind a lot as a kicker. If you look at the (flags at the) top of the stadium that we have, they'll be pointing at each other, they'll be pointing away from each other, and they'll flip about every four minutes."

Fielding didn't miss an extra point through six contests, nailing 25 of 25 tries, which has extended his streak to 125 straight attempts made. His last miss, and his only miss as a Buckeye, was on Oct. 14, 2023, against Purdue.

Courville hadn't had a chance to kick a field goal this season but is 4 of 4 on extra-point attempts. It's possible in the future, if the Buckeyes need a long field goal, that Day could go to Courville. The Ball State transfer made a 52-yarder when he was with the Cardinals.

BSB Midterm Grade: B+

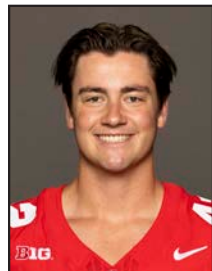
Punting Game

Ohio State trotted out Joe McGuire as the starter this season for the second straight year after what was a fairly unimpressive first season with the Buckeyes. Day's reasoning at the beginning of the year was that McGuire was the incumbent.

Through six games, the Buckeyes' net punting was 68th in the country at 39.6 yards per punt. They had 14 punts and allowed only 3 punt-return yards. There was one touchback, which came in the Illinois game. The game against the Fighting Illini was possibly McGuire's worst of the season. He had four chances in the game and averaged just 37.8 yards per boot, which prompted questions about the position at Day's next

weekly press conference.

Day said on Oct. 14 that McGuire would still be the starter but admitted that what he has put on the field has been a mixed bag. There is obviously something to say about the consistency of McGuire, which is part of why he earned the job in the first place both last season and this year, but when redshirt freshman Nick McLarty figures it out, he will likely earn the role due to his big leg.



Joe McGuire

It will be the first thing we do on Tuesday. I think we have the right guys in the game. We always take a look at that, in terms of protection and guys covering. I think it's been solid, but I know we can do better."

Only one of the punts this season was off the leg of McLarty. He booted the ball 45 yards against Grambling State on Sept. 6, which was the best punt of his career out of the three chances he has had in two seasons.

When it comes to punt-return defense, the Buckeyes are tied for 24th in the country with just 3 yards allowed total on one return.

That is partially due to the fact that the Buckeyes have not had to punt often, but also because McGuire doesn't boot the ball far enough for returners to have open space to take the ball back.

BSB Midterm Grade: C-

Return Game

There have been some encouraging parts of the Buckeyes' return game, and some very discouraging parts of it, which is similar to how last season went as well.

Junior Brandon Inniss has been the main returner for the Buckeyes again and has helped OSU to 23rd in the country in punt returns with an average of 13.0 yards per return (104 total yards, eight returns).

Inniss has been inconsistent at times but has yet again shown flashes like he did last year. He had a 28-yard return against Ohio and one game later broke one for a 32-yard return against Washington, but he finished that run by getting the ball punched out from behind. The Huskies recovered the fumble.

While Day made it clear that he wasn't happy about the fumble, he said that nobody was more upset about the fumble than Inniss himself, and the coaches still believed that he was the right guy for returns.

"I think that Brandon needs to hold onto the ball," Day said when asked about his punt returner. "And so whether it's offense or special teams, we're going to get that fixed. And we believe in Brandon. If Brandon didn't fumble that ball, I don't think anybody



Brandon Inniss

would be asking if he was the right guy back there. So he needs to hang on to the ball, because he's had two good returns. And that's the bottom line. So we're going to count on him getting that fixed, making sure that the ball is not on the ground."

The biggest return from the Buckeyes this season was against Minnesota when Inniss fielded the punt, took a few steps forward, and threw the ball across the field to Lorenzo Styles Jr., who took the ball back 36 yards.

Jeremiah Smith got a chance on a punt return against the Bobcats on Sept. 13 and dropped the punt that was traveling a little farther over his head than he thought it would. He was able to recover his own fumble and ended up with minus-6 yards on the return.

Last season was the first time a Buckeye returner took a punt back for a touchdown recently, with safety Caleb Downs taking advantage of his opportunity to do so against Indiana on Nov. 23, 2024. That was just after the 10-year mark of the previous punt-return touchdown Ohio State had, which also came against Indiana on Nov. 22, 2014. Downs hasn't had a return this season, likely due to the Buckeyes not wanting to risk him being injured.

Inniss had the only three kickoff returns for the Buckeyes, taking them back a total of 57 yards for an average of 19.0, which was tied for 84th in the country.

When it comes to kickoff-return defense, Ohio State was 62nd in the country through six games, allowing 19.1 yards per return. There have been seven attempted returns and 30 touchbacks, with Jayden Fielding not giving many chances to take kicks back.

Against Washington, the Huskies had a 41-yard return that was a threat to be returned for a touchdown, but Fielding made the stop himself.

"He got run over slow, but he got him down," Day said with a laugh. "He might be our leading tackler on kickoff, which is not good, but he passed the toughness test for a kicker."

Aaron Scott Jr. has also impressed on the kick-return defense unit, making some big hits and earning praise from his head coach.

"Aaron Scott's a player who, to me, he made the plays that he made in the game through the last couple of weeks," Day said. "The last 13 times that we've run down on kickoff, he was the first guy to the 30-yard line. Then he gets there in the (Washington) game, and he makes that hit inside the 20-yard line. Why? Because for the last 13 times, he was the first guy to the 30-yard line. It's a great example. Aaron Scott's going to start playing more football around here. And so that's how you cut your teeth on special teams."

Overall, the Buckeyes are still not great on special teams but have made some improvements. But Day is still working to try to make the unit as good as it can be.

"Special teams have to be an advantage for us," Day said. "We put a lot of work into it. We had a lot of buy-in in the program through coaches and players."

BSB Midterm Grade: C+

George's Fourth Quarter Powered Buckeyes

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 27-16 win over Wisconsin on Oct. 14, 1995.

By MIKE WACHSMAN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It was becoming something of an aggravating habit for the Ohio State football team in 1995, having to flip the switch to really get going and turn things on in the second half.

The Buckeyes were locked in a tight battle into the fourth quarter against Penn State before eking out the win and actually trailed Notre Dame at halftime before shifting into high gear and pulling away for a double-digit victory.

Most observers probably felt that kind of performance would be unnecessary against Wisconsin, which had a solid team but really should not have presented too many problems. But the Badgers had other ideas, and the game wasn't under control until senior running back Eddie George put on his Superman cape and once again rescued the Buckeyes on the way to a closer-than-it-looked 27-16 win in Madison.

George finished the day with 141 yards and three touchdowns on 26 carries, with two of the touchdowns coming in the fourth quarter. The first was a simple 1-yard plunge, while the second was an electrifying 51-yard burst with 6:33 remaining to put the game on ice.

"It just comes down to the fourth quarter," George said. "We did it in the fourth quarter against Penn State and in the second half against Notre Dame. We did it today. We're going to have to come out with some aggressiveness next week (against Purdue). Sooner or later, it's going to catch up to us. You can't really depend on the fourth quarter to pull things out."

George recalled the memory of tying the Badgers the last time the Buckeyes played in Madison and did not want a repeat of that scenario.

"It felt like '93 all over again," he said. "I knew we were going to have to come in here, put on our hard hats and bring our lunch pails and go to work. That was my feeling all along. They came out hitting."

By this time, the Buckeyes had amassed a 6-0 mark and had victories both impressive and gritty.

The one constant was the performance of George, who – other than a 99-yard performance in the opener against Boston College – had rolled up over 100 yards in five straight

contests and over 200 against Washington and Notre Dame.

George got a great block from Terry Glenn in the open field on his 51-yard touchdown run after bursting through a gaping hole created by the interior offensive line and fullback Nicky Sualua.

"I go, 'Man, let me put it in the end zone and put the icing on the cake and let's get out of here with the win.' It was a great blocking play all the way around," George said.

By this time in the season, the Buckeyes had ascended to No. 4 in the Associated Press rankings and were receiving first-place votes. They were easily the class of the Big Ten, and George was gaining momentum as a legitimate Heisman Trophy candidate.

"It's definitely a big-time win and confidence booster," he said. "I guess we're the top team in the Big Ten, and everybody is going to play us tough. Today we just needed to settle down and play our game, keep focused and keep the faith."

Trailing 16-13 early in the fourth quarter, Ohio State fed George on six of the eight plays needed to find the end zone. Pay dirt was found when George took a pitch left and scampered in untouched to put Ohio State up 20-16 with 8:32 remaining.

Ohio State outfoxed the Badgers on the next drive, eschewing the perimeter runs that had been working for a burst up the middle. George went for 3 yards behind center on first down then ripped through a gaping hole and settled in behind Glenn's block before crossing the goal line.

Offensive coordinator Joe Hollis felt that the Badgers were getting wise to Ohio State runs to the edge, so he decided to get back to basics and hammer the middle of the line.

"In the second half, they were overplaying our perimeter, and that's why we wanted to stick it back inside with some hardball stuff," Hollis said. "We decided we were going to quit finessing these people and take the ball on the corner. Instead, we're going to attack the middle and take the ball north and south."

Hollis was careful not to tip Ohio State's formation on George's long touchdown run.

"They'd seen a sprint draw, which is a man-type scheme to the two-man side, but they had not seen the fastball (quick handoff) to the tight end side," Hollis said. "That was just a base blocking scheme, one of the oldest plays in football. It's strictly a north and south play. I think they may have run themselves out of it on the line of scrimmage. We get into their secondary, and Eddie makes a tremendous run."

While the Buckeyes had success with the passing game against Wisconsin, it never

veered too far from its identity.

"Our bread and butter is Eddie George," Hollis said. "He's running over people, giving us a big lift, and I think that's what we saw in the second half."

It became apparent as the weeks went on that George's biggest competitor for the Heisman would be Nebraska's Tommie Frazier. The senior quarterback was responsible for 31 touchdowns that season and helped Nebraska to an unbeaten season and national championship. He was putting up highlight plays each week, so it was all that George could do to keep himself near the top of the pecking order.

George was also becoming a valuable commodity out of the backfield, as his four grabs for 26 yards against Wisconsin attest.

John Cooper may not have endeared himself to Ohio State fans during his tenure as head coach, but he was smart enough to know that a team needs to rely on its best players to win football games.

And George was the best player on a loaded Buckeye roster.

"When the game's on the line, we went to big number 27, and he came through," Cooper said. "I'm very proud of Eddie George. Any honors that might come Eddie's way are very, very deserving. I've never been around a finer young man than Eddie George."

Being at or near the top of any Heisman

Trophy list would have seemed like a pipe dream for George in the early days of his Ohio State career. Known more for fumbling than for rumbling around and over defenders, the Philadelphia native became known as a powerful, reliable force in the Buckeye backfield. After fumbling three times in his freshman season, George carried the ball over 600 more times with only six fumbles.

He also had that rare quality that the great backs possess, an ability to fall forward and pick up an extra 2 yards. George did not dance around in the backfield waiting for a hole to open. He ran patiently behind his blockers, then exploded through ample holes for big gains. His size – 6-3 and 230 pounds – made him a challenge to tackle, as did his ability to get upfield quickly.

"The best thing Eddie does is run north and south," Cooper said. "Anytime you can force someone to run east and west and bounce outside and dance around, you can stop them. Eddie's a big, strong, physical football player, and once he gets those shoulders lowered and going north and south, he's tough to bring down."

George and the Buckeyes would return home the following weekend to take on a struggling Purdue squad, and as good as he had been up to this point, there were some eye-popping performances just around the corner.

Buckeye Sports BulletinBoard

RULES AND RATES: 20 cents per word, 10 cents for more than one insertion. Minimum order of \$5. No agency discounts. Make checks payable to Buckeye Sports Bulletin. We accept Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express.

All ads are uniformly set with the first two words set in boldface capital letters at no charge. However, no other words may be set in boldface. Anyone planning a larger or more distinct ad may receive our ad rate card upon request.

We reserve the right to request additional information or merchandise be submitted from advertiser prior to acceptance of an ad, and we reserve the right to refuse advertisements considered objectionable.

Deadline is one week prior to publication date. Call (614) 486-2202 or write P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212 for info.

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.

FOR SALE — OSU-MICHIGAN Game, 1975 - original RADIO broadcast on CD! Woody's last great team & Archie's last UM game as Bucks go 11-0! Three-disk set runs 3½ hours! Listen in your car! \$25 + \$3 S & H. Call 1-630-527-8890!

WANTED TO buy: OSU football memorabilia and equipment, programs, pennants, glasses, books, jerseys, helmets, ticket stubs. One item or a hundred. Will travel. Call George at (614) 506-1081.

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

WANTED TO buy: OSU basketball tickets/stubs from the 1960s, '70s, '80s, '90s & 2000s. Call Mike at (704) 995-0414.

WANTED TO buy: OSU football memorabilia, programs, ticket stubs, pennants, championship rings, gold pants, helmets, autographs, game-used equipment, small or large collections. Call Chris at (419) 957-6789.

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

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

BSB PUBLISHER Frank Moskowitz and other members of the BSB staff are available to speak at your business, social or alumni group meetings. Informative and fun. Call (614) 486-2202 for details.

I will wait for YOU

I'll be your Home Concierge whenever you have a furniture or appliance delivery, service call, or other important event that requires someone to be in your home.

Pet Friendly. Insured.

Nancy Magargal • 614.208.5702 • illwaitforyou5nancy@gmail.com



Penn State Hopes To Stop Slide In Columbus

By **GREG WILSON**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Going into this year, three regular-season games were ones to circle on the Buckeyes' schedule. The opener against Texas was the first, and the Nov. 1 match-up against Penn State was the second of the three.

But the Nittany Lions have now dropped four straight games, the third of which was followed by the firing of long-time head coach James Franklin the day after the loss.

Associate head coach Terry Smith took over as interim head coach following Franklin's departure.

"Obviously, this is a challenging week," said Smith in his first press conference as head coach. "I think the guys are responding somewhat. We still have some work to do. They're all hurt and torn and, you know, disappointed in what happened. Coach (Franklin) brought everyone in the building in. These are young people. They're not used to this. We, as adults, have to adjust quicker.

"But we're just taking the time to mentor these guys and spend some quality time with them, to get them interested and motivated back out here. I thought (Oct. 15) was a little bit better than (Oct. 14), and that's all we want, is each day to just make some progress."

But the collapse continued into the first game without Franklin. The Nittany Lions visited Kinnick Stadium to face off against Iowa and fell by a score of 25-24.

Smith didn't hold back getting into the reasons he felt the game went the way that it did.

"Obviously, it's a very disappointing loss. It's very disappointing the way we lost. I don't feel like we made them earn it at the very end," Smith said. "All three areas need improvement. In our special teams, we continue to have problems handling punts and kicks and making good decisions with the ball there. On offense, we continue to not be able to throw the ball down the field or even throw the ball in the intermediate zone. On defense, we can't get stops when we need stops. It's glaring, and I have to get it fixed."

The Nittany Lions and Ohio State both will have an idle week to address any issues they feel need to be addressed going into the game on Nov. 1.

With quarterback Drew Allar out after being injured against Northwestern, redshirt freshman quarterback Ethan Grunkemeyer got his first start against the

Hawkeyes. He was 15 of 28 passing in the game for just 93 yards and two interceptions, getting sacked once.

Before the game, Smith had confidence in the young quarterback, despite his not having much game experience and being thrown into a starting role all of a sudden.

"Grunk's looked really good," Smith said. "He's had a really good two days. He's excited for the opportunity. We sat down and met yesterday. We had a really good conversation. Fortunately or unfortunately, he and I have been thrust into a role that neither one of us saw coming for this week. And so I think he's had a really good two weeks, and we're encouraged. And hopefully he has another two good practice days and goes into the game feeling good."

Smith could also bring quarterback Jaxon Smolik out to try to use him as a rushing threat. He did so against the Hawkeyes, and Smolik had four carries for 3 yards, two of which gained first downs.

"He brings some more athleticism to it," Smith said. "I just wanted to give (Iowa) a lot to prepare for and see if we could get a play or two to be made by him, which he did. Turned out to help us move the sticks."

One area where Penn State brought back a lot of talent was on the offensive line, where it will start Nick Dawkins, Vega Ioane, Drew Shelton, Anthony Donkoh and Nolan Rucci.

The line has allowed seven sacks this season and has helped lead a rushing attack that is No. 53 in the country with 169.6 yards per game on the ground.

Returning starters Kaytron Allen and Nicholas Singleton lead the rushing game. Allen has been the more effective of the two this season with 612 total yards on 98 carries for nine touchdowns, while Singleton has 76 totes for 274 yards and six scores. Allen was a workhorse for Penn State in the loss to Iowa, carrying the ball 28 times for 145 yards and two touchdowns compared to his counterpart's six carries for 15 yards.

"Kaytron had a great game," Smith said. "He was running the ball effectively. He had zero carries for negative yards. Everything was positive, 28 touches. I'm super proud of those guys for that."

The Lions brought in multiple transfers in the receiving game and had to replace last year's leading receiver, tight end Tyler Warren, as well. Starting against the Buckeyes in those spots will likely be wide

Get To Know ... Penn State

- **2025 Record:** 3-4, 0-4 Big Ten.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Spread; Defensive Formation – 4-2-5; Starters returning – Offense 7, Defense 5, Specialists 2.
- **Head Coach:** Terry Smith, 1st year at Penn State, 0-1.
- **Series History:** 40th meeting; Ohio State leads 25-14.
- **School Facts:** Location – University Park, Pa.; Enrollment – 48,535; Nickname – Nittany Lions; Colors – Blue and White; Conference – Big Ten; Stadium – Beaver Stadium (Surface – Grass; Capacity – 106,572).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Kaytron Allen	98	612	6.2	9
Nick Singleton	76	274	3.6	6

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
E. Grunkemeyer	23-39	59.0	198	1-2

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Trebor Pena	23	221	9.6	1
Luke Reynolds	21	213	10.1	0
Kyron Hudson	19	218	11.5	2
Devonte Ross	18	255	14.2	3
Nick Singleton	13	95	7.3	0

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game – 34.0
Rushing Yards Per Game – 169.6
Passing Yards Per Game – 185.4
Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 355.0

2025 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Aug. 30	NEVADA	W, 46-11
Sept. 6	FIU	W, 34-0
Sept. 13	VILLANOVA	W, 52-6
Sept. 27	OREGON	L, 30-24
Oct. 4	at UCLA	L, 42-37
Oct. 11	NORTHWESTERN	L, 22-21
Oct. 18	at Iowa	L, 25-24
Nov. 1	at Ohio State	TBA
Nov. 8	INDIANA	TBA
Nov. 15	at Michigan State	TBA
Nov. 22	NEBRASKA	TBA
Nov. 29	at Rutgers	TBA

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Amare Campbell	32	19	51	5.5-24	2-16
Zakee Wheatley	33	16	49	1-2	0-0
Dominic DeLuca	21	18	39	2.5-3	1-1
King Mack	14	13	27	0-0	0-0
Audavion Collins	21	4	25	1-5	0-0
D. Dennis-Sutton	16	8	24	5.5-25	2-9

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD
Jahmir Joseph	1	49	49.0	1
Zane Durant	1	14	14.0	0
Alonzo Ford Jr.	1	3	3.0	0
Zakee Wheatley	1	2	2.0	0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed – 19.4
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 158.7
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 145.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 303.7

receivers Kyron Hudson, Devonte Ross and Trebor Peña, along with tight end Khalil Dinkins or Luke Reynolds.

Pena leads all pass catchers with 23 receptions, which he has taken for 221 yards and one score. But Ross has 18 catches and a team-leading 255 yards and three touchdowns. Four receivers on the team have over 200 yards, but none of them is over 300. That is compared to Ohio State's Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate, who have 602 and 587 yards for seven and six touchdowns, respectively.

Former Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles is in his first year with Penn State, and as is always the case for his system, it seems to be taking a while for players to get a handle on it.

The Nittany Lions are 30th in the country in scoring defense, allowing 19.4 points per game, a number that is somewhat propped up by allowing 11, zero and six points in three nonconference games. They have allowed 30, 42, 22 and 25 points against Big Ten competition, an average of 29.8 points per game. They are also 21st in total defense, allowing 303.7 yards per game.

Starting on the defensive line will be edge rushers Dani Dennis-Sutton and Zureiah Fisher, along with tackles Zane Durant and Alonzo Ford Jr. As a unit, Penn State's defense is allowing 158.7 rushing yards per game, but it could give Ohio State running backs some trouble, as many teams have this season.

Dennis-Sutton is in the backfield often with 5½ tackles for loss for 25 yards and two sacks for 9 yards. The team as a whole has had 43 tackles for loss and 14 sacks.

Linebacker Amare Campbell is also

tied for the team lead in tackles for loss with 5½ and tied for sacks with two. He leads the Lions in tackles at 51, while linebacker Dominic DeLuca has 39 with a sack and a pass breakup.

Penn State has perhaps been most successful against the pass, allowing just 145.0 yards per game through the air from opposing quarterbacks. Despite some of the struggles the Nittany Lions have had, they still boast one of the most talented secondaries Ohio State quarterback Julian Sayin has had to face this year.

Cornerbacks Audavion Collins, A.J. Harris and Zion Tracy will start for the Lions, with safeties King Mack and Zakee Wheatley rounding out the defensive backfield.

Wheatley has the only interception of the group this season, though four other Nittany Lions have picked off a pass this year who aren't starters in the secondary.

Smith and Penn State are well aware of the reality in front of them. Many players came back specifically for the chance to win the College Football Playoff, and that is no longer an option for the reeling Nittany Lion squad.

But Smith and his players will likely want the next best thing they could get, which would be knocking off the No. 1 Buckeyes when nobody in the college football world is expecting them to put up a game.

"One thing I won't accept is a lack of effort," Smith said on Oct. 14. "And the guys know that. They understand that. We hope we're going to win. But we're going to play hard. And you guys will be sitting there saying, 'Yeah, these guys played hard,' and then the result is the result. But they're going to play hard Saturday."



**YOUR FULL-SERVICE
PRINTING PARTNER
SINCE 1952**

Contact us at 614.261.1011 or
✉ kenwel@kenwelprinters.com



4272 Indianola Avenue | Columbus, Ohio 43214 | www.kenwelprinters.com



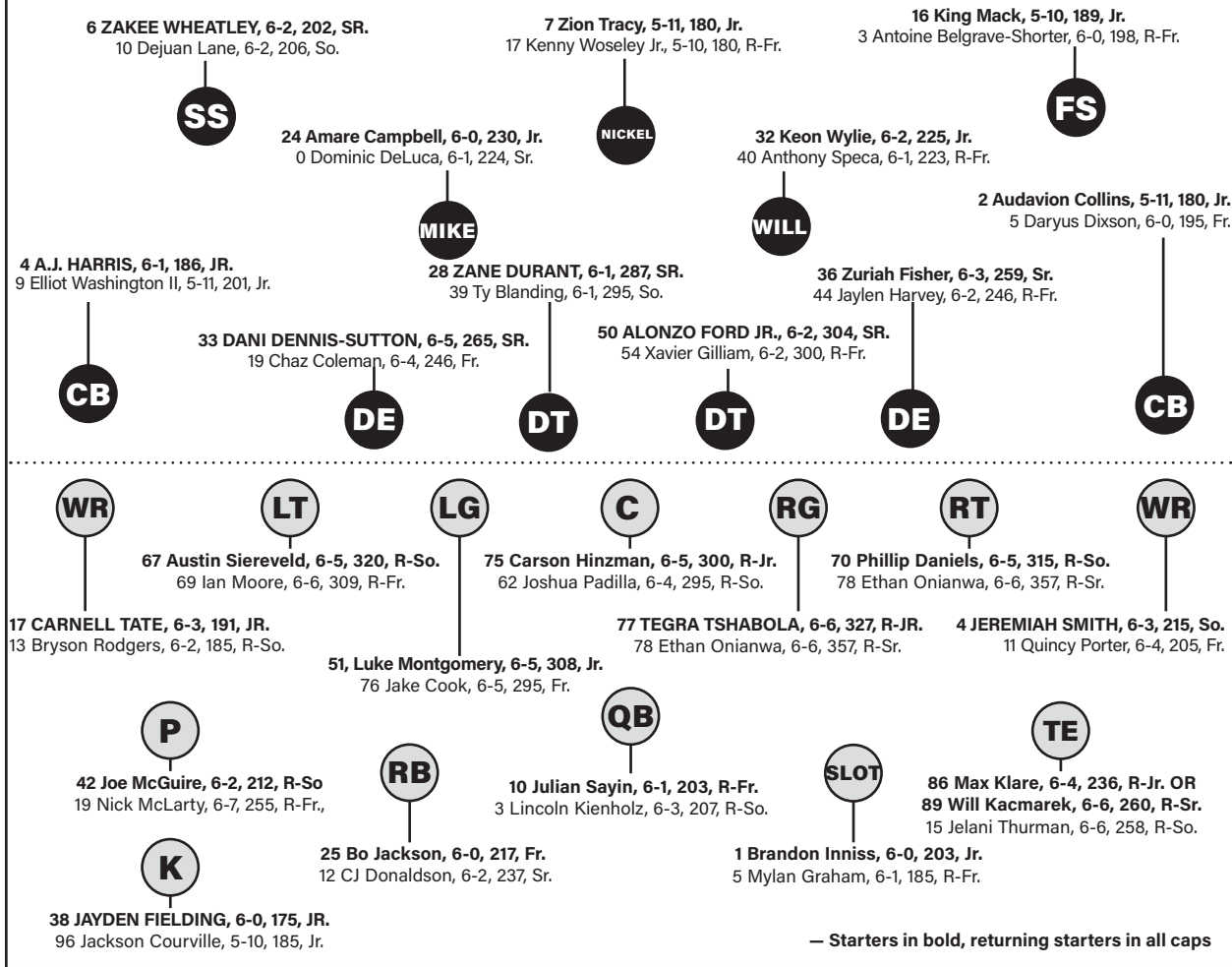
Penn State at Ohio State

Nov. 1 • TBA • TBA
Ohio Stadium; Columbus

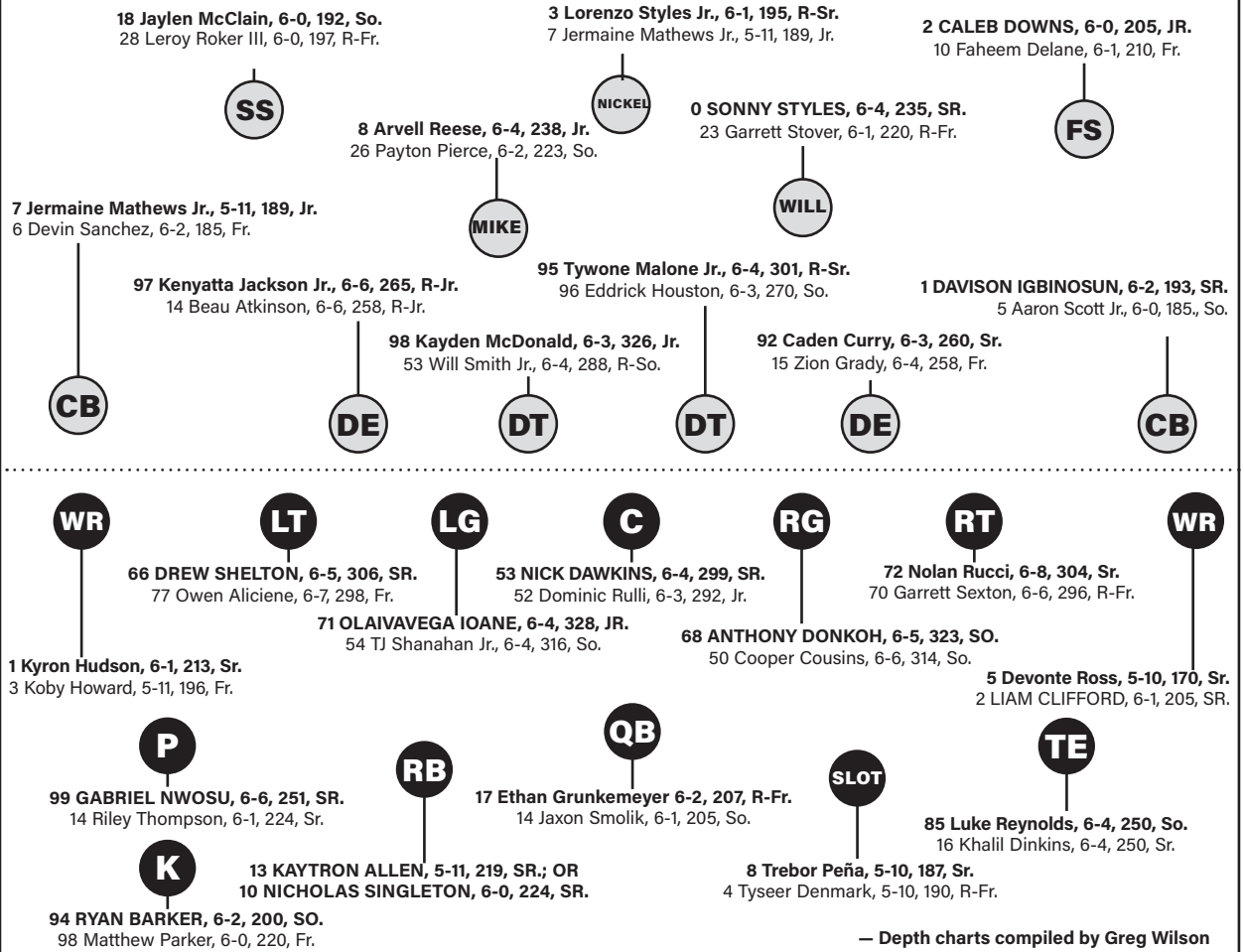


Projected Depth Charts

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



WHEN PENN STATE HAS THE BALL...



How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. PENN STATE RUSH DEFENSE

There's no truth to the rumor that Penn State's precipitous fall from the rankings and national title contention had FOX considering making this a Big 9 a.m. game. Nonetheless, there is plenty of intrigue with interim coach Terry Smith taking over for the fired James Franklin for a road tilt at Iowa on Oct. 18. Penn State blew a 21-10 third-quarter lead in the 25-24 defeat for its fourth straight loss. Like the Buckeyes, the Nittany Lions have an open date before their Nov. 1 clash. What is lost in all the PSU news is that the talent level is still high, but it has underperformed when counted on the most. The Buckeyes are still struggling to establish the running game and abandoned it for much of the 34-0 win over Wisconsin. They gained 98 yards for a 3.5 average. At some point, better production will be critical. The Penn State defense under coordinator Jim Knowles (remember him?) has struggled in his first season. Going into their game against the Hawkeyes, the Nittany Lions ranked 71st in rush defense (144.3 yards per game), but the Hawkeyes, who were 43rd (184.0) in rushing offense, ran for 245 yards (7.4) with a long of 67 by QB Mark Gronowski. Defensive end Dani Dennis-Sutton was on several preseason watch lists. Junior linebacker Amare Campbell is one of 10 FBS players with 50-plus tackles and 5½-plus TFLs this season. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

PENN STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Nittany Lions entered the Iowa game averaging 169.0 yards per game on the ground, good for 52nd nationally. Facing a Hawkeye rush defense that was first in the Big Ten and No. 5 in the NCAA (79.0), Penn State posted an impressive 173 yards. The Nittany Lions relied on Kaytron Allen, who had 145 yards on 28 carries (5.2) vs. Iowa and is averaging more than six yards per carry. Fellow senior Nick Singleton carried six times for 15 yards. Of note, running backs coach Stan Drayton held the same title for Ohio State and coached Carlos Hyde and Ezekiel Elliott, among others. For the Buckeye defense, Wisconsin ran for 95 yards for a 3.1 average. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. PENN STATE PASS DEFENSE

Julian Sayin was 36 of 42 for 393 yards and four touchdowns. Carnell Tate had 111 yards and two TDs, and Jeremiah Smith had a team-high nine catches for 97 yards. Penn State gave up only 68 yards to Iowa through the air, which wasn't surprising because the Hawkeyes were 128th in passing yards (142.0). The Nittany Lions are sixth in pass defense (145.0) and average 2.3 sacks per game to rank in the top third in the nation. Safety Zakee Wheatley has played 52 games for the Nittany Lions and has six interceptions. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

PENN STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Drew Allar sustained a season-ending knee injury in the loss to Northwestern on Oct. 11, so freshman Ethan Grunkemeyer made his first career start vs. the Hawkeyes. His previous college experience was completing 9 of 14 for 114 yards and a TD. Against the Hawkeyes, he was 15 of 28 for 93 yards and two interceptions under hostile conditions. The Buckeyes limited the Badgers to 7 of 15 for 49 yards, and Sonny Styles had an interception. The Buckeyes had three sacks. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

SPECIAL TEAMS

PSU kicker Ryan Barker has made 11 of 12 field goals, including four from 40-plus yards. Dennis-Sutton has two of PSU's four blocked punts this season. Xavier Gilliam blocked a 66-yard field-goal attempt, and Elliott Washington II returned it 35 yards for a touchdown as time expired in the first half vs. Iowa. Jayden Fielding missed a 38-yard field goal for the Buckeyes. **EDGE: PENN STATE**

INTANGIBLES

There's no telling what to expect from the Nittany Lions. With an open week to regroup and a new quarterback, expect as many new looks and trick plays as possible against the Buckeyes. With the season basically over, will the seniors who came back to win a national championship even care? Or is this a chance to save face in what amounts to their playoff game? **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

STAFF PREDICTION

This has a Michigan feel to it. Interim coach on a bad team facing overwhelming odds. The talk before The Game last season was how many points the Buckeyes would run up, and winning the game was forgotten. Ryan Day has learned his lesson and won't play down to an opponent. This will land between a blowout and a nail-biter. **OHIO STATE 38, PENN STATE 13**

Franklin's Firing Could Affect Ohio State

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Based on the discourse from college football writers and experts heading into the season, it seemed that Penn State had a better chance of winning the national championship than missing the playoffs. However, a three-game losing streak that the Nittany Lions suffered to open Big Ten play not only ended any chance they had of making the playoffs but also left former coach James Franklin without a job.

Franklin, who led Penn State from 2014-25, helped the program overcome the fallout of a child sex abuse scandal. He finished his tenure with a 104-45 record, including a 64-36 record in the Big Ten. In 2016, Franklin lifted the program to its first Big Ten championship in eight years, but he never replicated that success during the remainder of his tenure.

With a putrid 4-21 record against teams ranked inside the top 10 of the Associated Press' rankings, Franklin routinely struggled against the best teams in the Big Ten.

Still, headed into this season, Penn State boasted a loaded and experienced roster and an impressive coaching staff, which still includes former Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles.

The Nittany Lions were ranked No. 3 only 15 days before Franklin was fired after a 3-0 start. The first blow for Penn State came when it lost yet another big game to Oregon, 30-24 in double overtime on Sept. 27. The Nittany Lions then suffered a 42-37 loss to UCLA the next week.

Penn State couldn't fix its problems in Week 7 and was defeated 22-21 by Northwestern. That loss was all Penn State athletic director Pat Kraft needed to see. He fired Franklin on Oct. 12, even with his buy-out reportedly being around \$50 million.

"It does seem shocking that a coach, who had a team four weeks ago that was No. 2 in the country, and he's out of a job,"

said Bill Rabinowitz, author of the recently published book "Buckeye Brotherhood" and a beat reporter who covers Ohio State on his Substack, "Bill on the Buckeyes."

"It's a tough business, especially now that players are being paid. They expect instant results, and Penn State had every reason to think that this team would be a national championship contender. They should have been, so I think that the athletic director just thought it was not working."

Penn State has shifted its focus to hiring its next coach, according to Kraft. With the Nittany Lions in a state of flux, BSB sat down with Buckeye Scoop recruiting analyst Bill Greene, Eleven Warriors deputy editor Dan Hope, Buckeye beat reporter Bill Landis, who also covers Ohio State on his Substack "Bill and Doug on Ohio State football" and Rabinowitz to discuss how the next era of Penn State football could affect Ohio State, among several other topics.

OSU Played Role In Franklin's Firing

Franklin's issues with elite teams were best put on display against Ohio State. Under Franklin, Penn State was just 1-10 against its rivals in Columbus. The sole victory came in 2016 when the Nittany Lions won despite being outgained by 137 yards, needing a field-goal block and a 60-yard return for a touchdown to prevail. According to Hope, the Buckeyes' dominance over the Nittany Lions played a role in Franklin ultimately being fired.

"The athletic director said it himself that his struggles in big games were one of the reasons why they decided to make this change, and certainly that Ohio State game has been one of the big games for that team for the past decade," Hope said. "Certainly, I think the fact that eight years in a row Penn State was unable to win that game – you think back to a game like last year where it looked like they were in a good position to win, and they squandered it away. That

just happened too many times in too many of those big games for him to keep his job."

Penn State had its chances to beat Ohio State. In 2017, the Nittany Lions blew a 15-point fourth-quarter lead in Columbus. Then in 2018, Franklin's squad was defeated after holding a 12-point lead in the fourth quarter.

In each of the last two games, Penn State held Ohio State to 20 points in each contest but failed to score enough points to win either game.

"They have had Ohio State on the ropes several times and just couldn't close the deal," Rabinowitz said. "And then other years, when it looked like Ohio State was clearly the better team, Penn State gave them all they could handle. It's generally not been the case that Ohio State has dominated Penn State. The Buckeyes just have found ways to win, and Penn State has found ways to lose, and that's kind of been the case for Franklin against a lot of top teams."

Landis, on the other hand, didn't necessarily think the Nittany Lions' losses against the Buckeyes played a direct role in Franklin's firing.

"I actually don't think it played that large of a part," Landis said of Franklin's woes against Ohio State. "If James Franklin had gone 10-2 this year with losses to Oregon and Ohio State, he wouldn't have been fired. He might have chosen to leave. Maybe they would have come to some kind of mutual understanding that maybe the thing had to run its course. But I don't think he would have been fired the way he was."

"I'm not saying it was unimportant. Penn State clearly would like to get over that hump and win the Big Ten a little more regularly and be on the right side of those games more often than not, but I actually don't think his firing had much to do with his record against Ohio State."

One thing that Hope, Landis and Rabinowitz were in agreement on was that the

Nittany Lions' losing streak was stunning. While the Nittany Lions' loss to Oregon, a team ranked inside the top 10, was the sort of loss Penn State fans had become accustomed to over the last decade, they were favored by more than 20 points ahead of each of their losses to UCLA and Northwestern.

Hope's best explanation for how Penn State's losing streak happened is that the program simply caved under the weight of its preseason expectations.

"It's stunning. People talk about not letting one loss turn into two, and they let one loss turn into three," Hope said. "It's like losing that game at Oregon in double overtime, it just seemingly broke them, and they just were unable to bounce back the last two weeks. I'm sure the pressure that that whole team felt, that James Franklin felt, for this to be a championship kind of season, and then to lose that first game, really ramped up that pressure of, now you have to win all the rest of your games, and they just weren't able to respond to that pressure."

Identity Of New PSU Coach Still Unknown

Penn State's coaching search is still in its infancy, but it seems at least one coach has decided against taking over at State College. Indiana coach and Pennsylvania-native Curt Cignetti was thought of as a potential successor of Franklin, but he signed an eight-year \$93 million extension only days after Penn State made its coaching change.

Hope, Landis and Rabinowitz were each interviewed before Cignetti's extension was announced, but they all said that Nebraska head coach and Penn State alum Matt Rhule could be a name to keep an eye on.

"It certainly seems like Matt Rhule is probably the odds-on favorite, because he is a Penn State alumnus and he's worked with Pat Kraft before," Hope said. "It seems likely there will be mutual interest between those two. He would be my most likely candidate."

Before BSB went to press, Rhule emphasized how much he appreciated being at Nebraska, but didn't say outright that he wasn't interested in the Penn State job.

In the days after Franklin was fired, FOX college football analyst Joel Klatt listed multiple candidates who could succeed Franklin, including not just Rhule, but Ohio State offensive coordinator Brian Hartline. Hartline is only in his first year as a play-caller, but he has also been tremendously successful recruiting and developing wide receivers as Ohio State's receivers coach.

Despite his incredible track record as a recruiter, Hope, Landis and Rabinowitz all agreed that it's unlikely he is the next Penn State head coach.

"Brian Hartline, I think that would be a risk, because he's still kind of working through things as an offensive coordinator," Hope said. "He does have that recruiting gravitas, which is certainly big, but I'd be pretty surprised on either side if that would happen."

Rabinowitz said he wasn't sure if Hartline would be interested in the Penn State job but anticipates he would listen if the Nittany Lions expressed interest in him.

"I would think that the Penn State



REFLECTIONS OF SPAIN 🇪🇸 EVERY DISH, EVERY SIP, EVERY MOMENT.

Lunch ■ Dinner ■ Happy Hour ■ *Now booking holiday parties*

www.barcelonacolumbus.com ■ 614-443-3699

Historic German Village ■ 263 E Whittier St, Columbus



head-coaching job would be very appealing to most coaches,” Rabinowitz said. “I don’t know his particular situation. I don’t know whether that’s realistic or not, but I think that anybody in Brian Hartline’s situation would certainly listen. It doesn’t hurt to listen, and you can probably use it as leverage and get a raise out of it if you want. I think it would be foolish not to listen.”

OSU Recruiting Won't Be Hurt

Whoever is the next head coach at Penn State will have to do a solid job in recruiting. The Nittany Lions have already seen the ramifications of Franklin’s departure and have lost their entire 2027 class, while several others in the 2026 class have reopened their recruitments.

According to Greene, the Nittany Lions could be able to maintain a portion of their class, considering many of their 2026 pledges are from the area.

“I would think a lot of those kids, if you look, they have some in-state kids who probably wanted to play for Penn State their whole life, and they probably would stick around just to see (who they hire),” Greene said.

Greene said the Nittany Lions did a solid job recruiting under Franklin but also added that they weren’t often competing with the Buckeyes, despite being located not too far from Columbus.

“Not a lot, to be honest with you,” Greene said when asked how often the two programs recruited against each other, “especially not recently. There was a time when Ohio State took Tyreke Smith away from Penn State. Tyreke was committed to Penn State for a long time. They took him, but recently it just seems like they went after different guys, and usually if they went after the same guy, Ohio State was going to get them.

“The difference this year would have been (four-star defensive end) Jackson Ford took an official visit to Ohio State. I think they would have loved to have had him, and he committed to Penn State. That was like way back last summer. For the most part, I think they’re a step below the top elite teams.”

Roster construction is a challenge for every new coaching staff, but one would think the \$50 million buyout issued to Franklin could make it so that the Nittany Lions are slightly low on cash and therefore could struggle to keep up with other national-championship contenders.

According to Landis, though, the Nittany Lions wouldn’t have made the move if they didn’t have the money to make it work.

“I think a lot has been made of the buyout,” Landis said. “I actually don’t think it will impact them that much, and from what I gather from the reporting, it’s not a lump sum. It is able to be paid out annually, so that helps to defray the impact a little bit. I think James Franklin is going to have options to coach, and some pretty good ones. That will defray some of the costs on Penn State’s end as well.

“They will also have to maybe pay out some stuff to the assistants, assuming guys like (offensive coordinator) Andy Kotelnicki and (defensive coordinator) Jim Knowles aren’t back with whoever the new head coach is next year as well. Typically, when you make a move like this, you do it knowing you have the means to do so.”

Even if the Nittany Lions were able to overcome the costs that come with replacing a coaching staff, Hope said he doesn’t think the Buckeyes would be hurt too much if Penn State becomes a recruiting power in the Midwest.

“It would certainly have an impact on Ohio State, because it’s one of the schools that you are used to competing with for recruits,” Hope said. “But at Ohio State, it’s never going to be one school becomes a juggernaut, and all of a sudden you can’t get players anymore. There’s always going to be numerous elite programs that are competing for players, and Ohio State expects to be one of them. I think Penn State was already recruiting at a high level. They’re probably going to continue to recruit at a high level. But I don’t think it’s going to be a situation where Penn State comes in and all of a sudden they get all the players.”

Jim Knowles Struggling With PSU

One reason so many within the media were enthusiastic about the Nittany Lions’ chances before the season was that Knowles left Ohio State to occupy the same job at Penn State. Through six games, Knowles, the highest-paid defensive coordinator in college football, had not done a great job leading Penn State’s defense.

After strong performances against inferior foes in nonconference play, Penn State gave up 31.3 points per game in its first three losses to Big Ten foes. The Nittany Lions particularly struggled in their loss to UCLA, when Knowles’ group allowed the Bruins quarterback, Nico Iamaleava, to account for nearly 300 combined yards through the air and on the ground and five total touchdowns.

Landis said the Nittany Lions’ struggles defensively are at least partially due to the complex nature of Knowles’ system.

“You saw at Oklahoma State it took about three years for that defense to become pretty good and four years, really, for it to become one of the best in the country,” Landis said. “Then even at Ohio State, there was immediate improvement, but you also have to consider that Ohio State’s defense, before Knowles got there, was terrible, so there was kind of only one way to go, and it was up. But they still weren’t fantastic that first year. Even into the second year, they had some things to iron out, but obviously by year three, they had it going pretty good. It’s just a system that takes a while to sort of take hold, and it can be, I think, a little complicated at times for players to figure out, and that seems like what happened at Penn State.”

Considering his large salary and reputation as one of the best defensive coordinators in the sport, Knowles could still stay on the staff next year, but according to Landis, it depends on who the next head coach is.

“Depending on who it is, especially if it’s like an offensive-minded head coach, like a Matt Rhule, I could see (Knowles staying on). It just depends on the hire,” Landis said. “My guess is that he’s not there next year, because there are so many moving parts, but I think he’ll land in a pretty good spot if he’s not at Penn State next year.”

Experts Say PSU Will Aim To Catch OSU

If James Franklin was fired in part be-

cause he couldn’t get his program to Ohio State’s level, then his successor will be tasked with doing just that. Whoever replaces him will have quite the challenge, though. Coming off the national championship win in 2024 and an undefeated start to this season, Ohio State seems to have found its rhythm under head coach Ryan Day. As good as the Buckeyes have been recently, Hope said the goal for the Nittany Lions has to be to replicate the success their neighbors to the west have had recently.

“That’s the goal, but will it happen? That’s hard to say,” Hope said. “It’s a hard level to reach. That’s the risk there. There’s no guarantee that the next coach you get is going to be an upgrade over James Franklin. That’s certainly what the expectation is going to be, but it’s far from guaranteed that it will happen.”

Rabinowitz agreed that a program with Penn State’s rich history and resources has to aim toward being one of the best programs in the country when it hires its next coach.

“There’s no reason that Penn State, being in a populous state with the history and tradition that it has and the resources it has, shouldn’t be a top-10 program every year, and sometimes top-five, and sometimes right at the top,” Rabinowitz said. “Now I do think that being in State College, a remote setting with NIL, there just aren’t the business opportunities that there are in a place like Columbus. I think that’s something they have to deal with, but Pennsylvania is a more populous state than even Ohio.

“You have Philadelphia, which is not

close to Penn State, and Pittsburgh, which is a little bit closer but not close either, so you have some obstacles. But I lived in Pennsylvania, so I know the following that Penn State has. Yes, there are Pittsburgh fans, no question about that, but Philadelphia is very much a Penn State city. The rest of the state is very much a Penn State area. Penn State every year should be among the top four programs in the Big Ten.”

Landis said Penn State can hope for its occasional run deep in the playoffs but added that it’s not very realistic to expect the Nittany Lions to be as consistent as an Ohio State program that has finished 20 of the last 22 seasons (not including the COVID-19-shortened 2020 season) with at least 10 wins.

“I think that Penn State’s biggest issue right now is understanding what it is,” Landis said. “There is being competitive in the 12-team playoff and striving to make that, and hoping that in a given year you get the right path and have the right mix to get to a national championship and maybe win it. I think Penn State can win a national championship. I don’t think Penn State will ever be what Ohio State is, because I don’t know that anybody can be what Ohio State is.

“Ohio State is the most consistent winning program in the history of college football. They’re never bad. They’re always in the national title picture, and if Penn State has designs on trying to be that, they’re just going to feel like they come up short more often than not.”



**The Best Selection
of OHIO STATE
Gifts &
Sportswear!**

Order Online
collegetraditions.com

Order Toll Free
(800) 628-4678

**Red
Nike
Crew**

S - 3X
Item # 22411
\$75.00

**HOT item
this month!**



“Your National Championship Merchandise Headquarters.”

Tate Excelling In Increased Role in 2025

By **SAM CIPRIANI**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In 2024, wide receiver Carnell Tate played in 15 games for Ohio State en route to a national championship win.

However, in a stacked offense that featured four offensive players with 1,000 scrimmage yards on the season, Tate often became an afterthought on one of the best and most explosive offenses in the country.

Two of those players, then-freshman Jeremiah Smith and 2025 first-round draft pick Emeka Egbuka, quickly became quarterback Will Howard's favorite targets, with both wide receivers catching over 75 passes and 1,000 yards, as Tate took a back seat as the Buckeyes' third receiver.

In 2025, Tate is enjoying a breakout season, taking on a larger role alongside Smith and serving as a near-equal contributor in the team's passing game. His growth has been evident, not only in his performance but also in the leadership he provides to his teammates as the season moves forward.

Though Tate amassed 733 yards and four touchdowns on 52 receptions the junior wideout is poised to smash those numbers this season.

Despite being wide receiver No. 3 behind Egbuka and Smith last season, Tate said he wasn't worried about stats, noting that it's important for a wideout to stay levelheaded and play hard whether he's getting thrown the ball or not.

"At the end of the day, you have to go out there and play. There are probably three receivers out there on the field. You've got to go out there and play. You can't put bad things on film. You can't let the game affect you emotionally. Then if the ball's not coming your way, that's a conversation to have after the game or whatever that may be."

Tate may not be one to look at statistics, but through the first seven games of 2025, the Chicago native has racked up 34 receptions for 587 yards and six scores, already surpassing his touchdown total from last season.

In the Buckeyes' 42-3 victory over Minnesota on Oct. 4, Tate was utterly dominant, racking up a career-high nine catches for 183 yards and a touchdown.

On Tate's 44-yard touchdown reception from quarterback Julian Sayin, four Golden Gophers defenders ran toward Smith, who took a fake handoff in the backfield, leaving Tate on an island in one-on-one coverage, a decision Smith thought was laughable.

"When that happened, I saw all of them run at me. I just started laughing in their face, and I just threw my hand up because I knew it was a touchdown," Smith said.

With Ohio State's loaded offense and opposing defenses looking to isolate Smith in coverage, Tate has taken full advantage, emerging as a consistent playmaker and reliable target in key moments.

Smith said that with most teams looking to make him a nonfactor with various coverages, it's opened up opportunities for Tate and a deep group of pass catchers to thrive in Ohio State's wide-open offense.

"Everybody that we've played against just wants to take me out of the game," Smith said. "But (the Minnesota game) showed that we've got another dominant receiver on the other side of the field, so you can't just worry



FILE PHOTO

REACHING FOR STARDOM — Carnell Tate's breakout season is no surprise to those who have seen him patiently wait for his opportunity in the spotlight after being the third receiver behind Emeka Egbuka and Jeremiah Smith in 2024.

about me now. You've got to worry about Carnell Tate. You've got to worry about Brandon Inniss. You've got to worry about Max Klare. You've got to worry about the tight ends."

The pairing of Smith and Tate has arguably been the best duo in all of college football, and head coach Ryan Day said the receivers have only continued to grow as friends and teammates.

Day said the relationship between Smith and Tate is similar to what he's seen with talented receivers like Jaxon Smith-Njigba, Marvin Harrison Jr. and Egbuka, believing that the unselfishness, willingness to learn and desire to win have allowed them to become a dangerous twosome.

"I think they both learn from each other," Day said. "And what I mean by that is Carnell was here first. There's a lot of things that I'm sure Jeremiah learned from Carnell, just about day-to-day and the fact that there are just days where one guy is getting a lot of touches, the other guy maybe isn't, and then vice versa."

Tate said the chemistry between him and Smith has been key to their success this season, built on constant communication and trust in one another. That bond shows up every game. Both receivers rely on each other to make plays and create opportunities downfield, he said.

"We're always pushing each other to make a better play," Tate said. "We're always pushing each other to get each other open. If JJ doesn't do his job, I can't get open. If I don't do my job, JJ can't get open."

When Tate was asked if he and Smith were the best two receivers in the country following his personal-best day against Minnesota, the

junior had a simple response.

"I know that for sure."

Although Tate is an elite pass catcher, what makes the junior wideout so valuable is his unselfishness and willingness to put the team's needs above his own. Standing 6-3, 195 pounds, Tate possesses the size and strength to make an impact beyond just catching passes.

Whether he is being used as a blocker in the run game or is the second progression to Smith in the passing game, Tate's unnoticed efforts fuel the Buckeyes' success, Day believes.

"Carnell has done a lot of the dirty work that's allowed some of the other guys on offense to have success, and then vice versa," Day said. "When Jeremiah dictates coverage, or as a decoy and a play to open up something for Carnell, that's winning football. And that's going to be the key moving forward."

With a slew of talented receivers, Tate said he and his fellow pass catchers have felt disrespected when opposing defenses have tested Ohio State in man coverage, expressing the confidence to torch secondaries when the Buckeyes identify it.

Tate said he was shocked when Minnesota came out in man coverage and has been when other teams have tried a similar scheme, including Notre Dame in the Buckeyes' 34-23 victory in the national championship.

"We're just shocked that they came out in man," Tate said. "They tried us in man, and we made them pay for it."

Now an upperclassman, Tate has focused on developing his leadership skills and becoming a more vocal presence among his

teammates. Before the season began, Tate emphasized that the wide receiver room would only benefit from himself and Smith becoming more vocal.

Tate said he feels it's vital for himself as well as Ohio State's other top receivers to lead by example, as the younger wideouts in the room are a direct reflection of him.

"I take a lot of pride in that because at the end of the day, the room's a reflection of us," he said. "No matter who's out there in the room, whatever they go out there and put on film, go out there and say, it's a reflection of the room. It's a reflection of what's going on within the program. So, we take all the pride in that."

Even though Tate is on pace to have a career high in the midst of Ohio State's 7-0 start to the season, the junior receiver feels the Buckeyes still have a long way to go to reach their full potential.

Following the win over Minnesota, Tate said Ohio State's passing offense is still far from where they want to be.

"We just have to continue to stack," Tate said. "We continue to get better each week. We can't let last week affect us next week. And we always have to find ways to improve, because at every game, we all go out there and show our full potential. We know we can be better than in the past."

Tate said he feels like his efforts over the last 2½ seasons have put him in a position to thrive at Ohio State in 2025.

"Just all the hard work and preparation I put in," Tate said. "I just waited my turn, and my time is now."

Smith-Njigba: Seahawks Catch A Rising Star

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Seattle Seahawks fans beware. This article may be hazardous to your health or at least that of your star receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba.

Previous looks this season at Buckeyes in the NFL included receivers Marvin Harrison Jr. of the Arizona Cardinals, Tampa Bay rookie Emeka Egbuka and Garrett Wilson of the New York Jets.

Let's see what happened to them on Oct 12: Wilson hyperextended his knee vs. the Denver Broncos and was ruled out for the next game against the Carolina Panthers on Oct. 19.

Egbuka hurt his hamstring vs. the San Francisco 49ers, and even though the Buccaneers had an extra day to prepare for a Monday night game (Oct. 20) against Detroit, he was not expected to play.

Harrison sustained a concussion against the Indianapolis Colts. Fortunately, five days later, he was out of concussion protocol and cleared to play against Green Bay on Oct. 19.

Call it the BSB jinx because Jets quarterback Justin Fields, another featured Buckeye, missed a game due to a concussion.

Then there's the case of two other former OSU receivers. Terry McLaurin, on Oct. 19, missed his fourth straight Washington Commanders game with a quad injury, while teammate Noah Brown (groin) was placed on injured reserve.

Enter Smith-Njigba, or JSN as he's known. Maybe he can escape the injury bug. The Seahawks were scheduled to host ex-Buckeye QB C.J. Stroud and the Houston Texans on Oct. 20 before an open weekend, although the way JSN has been playing, not having a game could be the worst thing for him.

Through the games of Oct. 13, he had 42 receptions for a league-leading 696 yards (16.6 yards per reception) and three touchdowns.

It's been a transformative season for the No. 20 pick in the 2023 NFL draft. After the 2024 season, the Seahawks traded starting quarterback Geno Smith to the Las Vegas Raiders, offensive coordinator Ryan Grubb and offensive line coach Scott Huff were fired, top receiver DK Metcalf was dealt to Pittsburgh and receiver Tyler Lockett was released.

What could have been a chaotic mess has so far worked out for the Seahawks

(4-2) thanks to the arrival of veteran quarterback Sam Darnold from the Minnesota Vikings, the hiring of offensive coordinator Klint Kubiak and the signing of receiver Cooper Kupp.

Smith-Njigba and Darnold clicked, and the Seahawks led the NFL in yards per play (6.3) through Oct. 13, even though they were 27th in yards per rush (3.7). What's made the offense work is the big plays, with one out of five Darnold completions going for 16 or more yards.

Texans coach DeMeco Ryans knows why Seattle is so successful.

"JSN has done an outstanding job this year for Seattle. Darnold has found a nice target to throw to, and he's made that entire offense go," Ryans said. "Whether you're covering him or not, he's making explosive plays game after game. He continues to show up. JSN, he's definitely having a Pro Bowl-caliber year. He's doing an outstanding job."

Season For The Ages?

There's this for number freaks from CBS Sports' Garrett Podell.

"Darnold's deep passing prowess has unlocked former first-round pick wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba. As a result: Smith-Njigba leads the NFL with 696 yards receiving this season with 42 catches, tied for the fifth most in the league this year, on 56 targets, tied for the fifth most in the league this year. The last player with as many receiving (yards) on that low of a target total through six games was the receiving GOAT Jerry Rice in 1986 with 723 yards receiving on 55 targets, per CBS Sports Research."

The 17-game schedule is just past the one-third mark for the Seahawks, but some writers are already excited about JSN's potential for a milestone season. Eric Karabell of ESPN broached the idea that he could be the first player to surpass 2,000 receiving yards in a season. The record is 1,964 yards by Calvin Johnson of the Detroit Lions in 2012 in a 16-game season.

Since then, Kupp came the closest with 1,947 in 2021. Smith-Njigba is on pace for 1,972 yards. Ja'Marr Chase of the Cincinnati Bengals led the NFL last season with 1,708 yards.

Smith-Njigba was 12th with 1,130 yards on 100 catches (tying the franchise record) and six touchdowns last season. As

a rookie, he made 63 receptions for 628 yards (10.0) and four scores.

Combined, he became the eighth player in NFL history with 150 receptions, 1,700 yards, and 10 touchdowns before his 23rd birthday.

What has helped Smith-Njigba this season is that he has broken the stereotype of being strictly a slot receiver. Against Jack-

sonville, he had a catch on six different types of route categories, such as quick-hitters, vs. zone, out-breakers and deep balls.

According to Next Gen Stats, he is doing more from the outside receiver spot than in previous seasons. He lined up in the slot 74 percent of his plays in 2024, but it's just 17 percent in 2025.

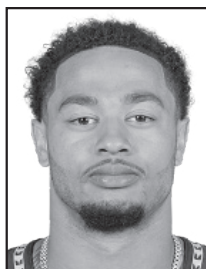
"To consistently win over and over again when a defense is planning on trying to take him out of a game, it speaks volumes," Kupp said of JSN to ESPN. "It just shows the ability in the route running and being able to understand the offense well enough to be able to move around and be in different spots. He's doing a really good job. He's a really good football player."

In a 20-12 win over Jacksonville on Oct. 12, JSN had a 61-yard TD, marking the sixth straight game he and Darnold connected on a pass of 36 yards or longer.

"It's pretty," Smith-Njigba said of the TD. "It's up in the air in the perfect spot, and he allows me to adjust and make a play on the ball. We just keep connecting, so hopefully we keep it going."

He has eclipsed 100 receiving yards in four of the six games.

"His consistency has been amazing, just the way he has come to work every single day, the way that he practices every single day," Darnold said. "That's a testament to the way he works and the standard that him and really Coop (Kupp) and a lot of the guys kind of set the standard in that room. They never waver from it."



Jaxon Smith-Njigba

One of the many highlights this season was his duel with Egbuka on Oct. 5 when the Buccaneers prevailed 38-35. Egbuka had seven catches for 163 yards with a long of 57 and a TD. Smith's eight receptions went for 132, a long of 53 yards and a score.

Buckeye Battle

It highlighted that OSU is Wide Receiver U.

Smith-Njigba was a five-star recruit from Rockwall, Texas, and part of a talented group of receivers for Ohio State in 2021 that featured future 2022 first-round picks Wilson (No. 10 overall to the New York Jets) and Chris Olave (No. 11, New Orleans).

Despite the presence of those two, Smith-Njigba had a breakout season in 2021 as a sophomore, making a school-record 95 catches (fifth all-time in Big Ten history) for 1,606 yards to set a conference mark.

He starred in the 2022 Rose Bowl when Stroud connected with him for an FBS bowl-record 347 yards, a school-record 15 receptions and three touchdowns.

From that peak came the valley of the 2022 season when a hamstring injury limited him to three games. He had five catches for 43 yards.

He was hampered early in his first pre-season with the Seahawks in 2023 by a fractured wrist, but that was only a temporary setback. His 63 receptions were the second most by a Seattle rookie in history. Former Buckeye Joey Galloway had 67 in a 16-game season in 1995.

"I feel like this sport can teach you a lot about life," Smith-Njigba said on "The Reset" podcast. "Just sitting out, being patient, waiting for your time to come, it all intertwines. I just try to take every good thing and bad thing and turn it my way and keep the next foot pressing forward."



A Sacred Trust

since 1850

St. Joseph Cemetery Lockbourne
Resurrection Cemetery Lewis Center
Holy Cross Cemetery Pataskala
Mt. Calvary Cemetery Columbus

catholiccemeteriesofcolumbus.org

www.theredbricktapandgrill.com

292 E. Gates St.
Columbus
(614) 444-2742

HAPPY HOUR 3-8pm Mon-Fri
Half off all 30 drafts • Half off select appetizers
Craft bottle specials all day

100 Craft Beers!

New Food & Cocktail Menu

Newly Renovated Patio with Fire Pit

Handmade Pizzas & In-House Smoked Meats




Three-Star SAF Bing Flips To Ohio State

Ohio State earned another commitment in the 2026 class when Baltimore St. Frances Academy three-star safety Khmari Bing pledged his services on Oct. 14.

RECRUITING
OUTLOOK
Greg Wilson

Bing was committed to Maryland until he backed off that pledge on Oct. 6. Just eight days later, he decided to commit to the Buckeyes.

Bing chose Ohio State over Alabama and Indiana, both of which he was also considering after decommitting from the Terrapins. He had an official visit to get to Tuscaloosa, Ala., on Nov. 8. He hasn't said whether he will still make that visit.

Bing (6-0, 190)is considered a cornerback on 247Sports but has been recruited by Buckeye safeties coach Matt Guerrieri to be a free safety. Bing is considered the No. 918 player in the country, the No. 78 cornerback and the No. 21 player in the state of Maryland.

The defensive back was last in Columbus for the Buckeyes' 42-3 win over Minnesota on Oct. 4, and that seemed to have a large impact on his decision.

"It was a great atmosphere," Bing told 247Sports after the visit. "The fans were really welcoming. All of the coaches greeted me, and the fans were welcoming. It was a great experience. The defense played lights out. Only giving up three points in 60 minutes is amazing."

Three-Star OT Brede Flips Commitment

Ohio State added to its 2026 class on Oct. 13 when three-star offensive tackle Landry Brede flipped from NC State to the Buckeyes.

Brede first received an offer from OSU on Sept. 6 and was on campus for a visit on Sept. 13 before pledging to offensive line coach Tyler Bowen.

Brede, of Mentor (Ohio) High School is the No. 1,114 player in the country, the No. 91 offensive tackle and the No. 48 player in the state of Ohio. The Buckeyes now have four tackle prospects in the class. He was the 21st (Bing was the 22nd) overall commitment in the class after Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School three-star tight end Corbyn Fordham (6-4, 215) flipped to Florida State on Oct. 3.

After Brede received his initial offer from the Buckeyes, it seemed likely that they would be able to pull him away from NC State.

"It was a great feeling to finally get an offer from the school I have grown up watching," Brede told On3. "I feel very blessed to have the opportunity to play for such an amazing program."

Brede joins Akron Hoban four-star Sam Greer (6-8, 315); Avon Lake, Ohio, four-star Maxwell Riley (6-5, 280); and Phoenix Mountain Pointe three-star Aaron Thomas (6-7, 300) as the four tackles in the class. The Buckeyes also have a commitment from Glendale (Ariz.) Sandra Day O'Connor three-star interior offensive lineman Tucker Smith (6-5, 280).

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
Khmari Bing	S	6-0	190	★★★	Baltimore St. Frances Academy
Brock Boyd	WR	6-2	183	★★★	Southlake (Texas) Carroll
Blaine Bradford	S	6-1	207	★★★★★	Baton Rouge (La.) Catholic
Landry Brede	OT	6-5	280	★★★	Mentor, Ohio
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
Khary Wilder	DE	6-4	260	★★★★	Gardena (Calif.) Junipero Serra

OSU Football 2027 Commitments					
Player(s) in the class of 2027 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.					
Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Jamier Brown	WR	5-11	170	★★★★★	Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne
Brady Edmunds	QB	6-5	215	★★★★	Huntington Beach, Calif.
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
Jameer Whyce	DL	6-4	270	★★★★★	Trotwood (Ohio) Trotwood-Madison

Five-Star '28 DL Commits To OSU

Ohio State earned its second commitment of the 2028 class when five-star defensive lineman Jameer Whyce (6-4, 270) pledged his services to the Buckeyes on Oct. 16.

Out of Trotwood (Ohio) Trotwood-Madison High School, Whyce is considered the No. 33 prospect in the country, the No. 5 defensive lineman and the No. 2 player in the state of Ohio. He holds 14 Division I offers but didn't take long to decide that he wants to remain in-state.

He joins Tampa (Fla.) Blake four-star running back Elijah Newman-Hall (5-11, 195) in the 2028 class for the Buckeyes.

Whyce was first offered by the Buckeyes when he was in Columbus for multiple one-day recruiting camps in June, and he was back for 7-on-7 competition as well. He returned to Ohio State for the season-opening 14-7 win over Texas on Aug. 30.

'27 WR Commit Part Of NIL Lawsuit

Ohio State five-star wide receiver commit Jamier Brown (5-11, 170) is part of a lawsuit attempting to allow high school players in the state of Ohio to profit off their name, image and likeness (NIL).

The complaint, filed in the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, was obtained by Pete Thamel of ESPN. He reported that it is

Brown's mother, Jasmine, listed as the plaintiff in the case, while the Ohio High School Athletic Association is the defendant.

Currently, the OHSAA doesn't allow high school athletes to profit from their name, image and likeness. The lawsuit aims to allow Jamier Brown to profit from NIL when he is still in high school. The complaint claims that Brown has an earning power of more than \$100,000.

"OHSAA's blanket ban not only singles out Ohio's high school student athletes for unequal treatment, but it also unlawfully suppresses their economic liberties, freedom of expression, and restrains competition in the NIL marketplace," the complaint states.

NIL is allowed for high school athletes in many states, and Brown told ESPN that he just wants similar opportunities that players across the country have. The lawsuit states that Ohio is one of just six states that don't allow high school athletes to profit off their NIL.

"What pushed me was knowing that allowing NIL for high school athletes in Ohio could be a game changer for a lot of kids like me," Brown told ESPN. "My family is getting by, but being able to use NIL would take some weight off my mom and me by helping cover things like tutoring, training and travel, which help me grow as both a student and a football player."

Brown plays at Wayne High School in Huber Heights, Ohio, and said that he takes

pride in being from the Buckeye State, which he said is part of the motivation to file this suit.

"It's about creating fairness and giving us the chance to use our name, image and likeness in positive ways while staying focused on school," Brown told ESPN. "If this helps make things a little easier for the next group coming up, then it's worth it."

"Being able to compete where you're from matters. Ohio is home, and I take pride in that, so my focus is staying here and doing my part to help make things better."

Brown has been committed to Ohio State since Nov. 23, 2024, and is ranked No. 5 in the country in the 2027 class, No. 1 at wide receiver and the top player in the state of Ohio.

After the news came out, Brown tweeted a statement on the matter.

"I'm being raised by an amazing single mom who's always doing her best to keep things steady while helping me chase my goals on and off the field," it read. "Like what's allowed in other states, I want to be able to use my name, image and likeness to help my family financially and get the extra after-school academic help and football training that can help me maximize my potential. NIL can help make that possible for me and many other student-athletes in Ohio."

Buckeyes In On PSU Decommits

Penn State head coach James Franklin was fired the day after the Nittany Lions lost 22-21 to Northwestern on Oct. 11, and since then, recruits have been going back on their commitments.

The Nittany Lions had lost two commitments in the 2026 class with Richmond (Va.) Trinity Episcopal School four-star wide receiver Davion Brown (6-1, 195) and Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic three-star wide receiver Lavar Keys (5-10, 165) looking for other options.

Seven other 2026 commitments did not go back on their commitments and remain pledged to the Nittany Lions class but have reopened their recruitments and will be in contact with other coaches.

The Lions also lost their entire 2027 recruiting class they had committed, with McKeesport, Pa., five-star running back Kemon Spell (5-9, 205), Middletown (Del.) Appoquinimink five-star offensive tackle Layton Von Brandt (6-6, 270), Pittsburgh Imani Christian Academy four-star safety Gabe Jenkins (6-0, 187) and Pittsburgh Pine-Richland four-star wide receiver Khalil Taylor (5-11, 180) all going back on their commitments to the program.

The Buckeyes are after both 2026 prospects who have reopened their recruitment and 2027 recruits who will no longer be going to Penn State.

One of the 2026 prospects who Ohio State has made a move for since Franklin's firing is Harrisburg, Pa., four-star running back Messiah Mickens (5-10, 200).

Mickens has been committed to Penn State since Aug. 19, 2023, and remains pledged, but he has reopened his recruitment and is trying to plan official visits to seven different schools.

The programs he hopes to get to are Ohio

ASK AN ANALYST

with Bill Greene Of Buckeye Scoop

Ohio State flipped Mentor, Ohio, three-star offensive tackle Landry Brede (6-5, 280) on Oct. 13. What do you make of Brede as a prospect, and what does he add to the class?

"First off, there is zero 2025 film out there on Landry Brede. I looked everywhere. I can't find it, and I would love to see it. The film we're watching is from a year ago, so that tells us something, but it doesn't tell us enough. If you look at his junior year, he's a developmental guy in my eyes, but he is 6-5 and lean. He's got a frame that you can put weight on, which is what I like, rather than taking someone like Cleveland Glenville three-star defensive lineman Jamir Perez (6-4, 360), where he's got to lose 50 pounds. That's hard to do. So Landry Brede would fit the profile of a kid I would want. I would love to see the 2025 film. I always thought he was an offer candidate, so I thought he was always going to be in the mix. It's not surprising, really. I think he's a good player. Those kids in Mentor, they play in a great program. They know how to work. They know how to win. So there's a lot of positives with Landry."

After James Franklin was fired, there were many prospects who decommitted from Penn State. Are there any you believe Ohio State has a chance with?

"I don't think there's anybody there they would want, to be honest with you. There is Roanoke (Va.)

North Cross three-star cornerback Jaziel Hart (5-11, 170). I watched his film. He's a Virginia kid, and simply because he plays corner, that kind of piqued my interest. I wouldn't really be interested in him, to be honest. Yet, if you look at the Ohio State class, they only have one corner committed. You have to take three in this class, so that's what makes me think maybe they'll look at that kid. They have their safeties locked in. They just took Baltimore St. Frances Academy three-star safety Khmari Bing (6-0, 190). I think Bing's a safety. I don't think he's a corner. Then they have Baton Rouge (La.) Catholic five-star safety Blaine Bradford (6-1, 207), who's a stud. Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School's Simeon Caldwell (6-2, 195) is a stud.

"They need two more corners. I like Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic four-star cornerback Jordan Thomas (6-1, 185), but that's it for this class. I guess (Hart) is worth taking a look at, but I think Ohio State can get better than just Hart. There are some kids in the class now that I have no idea if they would decommit, but Ohio State wanted Malvern (Pa.) Prep four-star defensive end Jackson Ford (6-4, 240), and he took an official visit to Ohio State. I think Jackson Ford is better than the four defensive linemen Ohio State has committed right now. I wonder if they would take a shot at him. There's Harrisburg, Pa., four-star offensive tackle Kevin Brown (6-5, 270). I think he is really good. If Ohio State

loses Phoenix Mountain Pointe three-star offensive tackle Aaron Thomas (6-7, 300), whether he's asked to leave, or whether he leaves on his own, I wonder if they would look at Kevin Brown as an offensive tackle replacement."

The Buckeyes have gone hard after Chattanooga (Tenn.) Baylor School five-star running back David Gabriel Georges (6-0, 205) in the 2027 class and are one of his top schools. Now that McKeesport, Pa., five-star running back Kemon Spell (5-9, 205) has reopened his commitment, what do you expect the Buckeyes to try to do at running back in that class?

"It's interesting because they took three in last year's class, I believe, but they only have one committed for 2026 so are they going to add another one in this class, or if they only take one, then next year you must take two then. Really, you have to see what they do to finish out this class. Running back-wise, I think they need two in this class, and I think they want two in this class, so we'll see where they go there. I don't think I'd be satisfied with just Delaware (Ohio) Rutherford B. Hayes four-star running back Favour Akih (6-0, 190), but maybe they would be, since they took a bunch last year, and (Isaiah West) is getting playing time. (Bo Jackson) is going to be a superstar, so maybe they just take one in this class and then target two in the next one."

State, Georgia, Miami, Missouri, Rutgers, South Carolina and Syracuse. Mickens is considered the No. 161 player in the class, the No. 13 running back and the No. 3 player in the state of Pennsylvania.

The Buckeyes could also get a visit from Harrisburg, Pa., four-star offensive tackle Kevin Brown (6-5, 270), who is still committed to Penn State in the 2026 class.

He told On3 that there are two schools that he wants to try to visit, with Ohio State being one of them and West Virginia the other. Brown is the No. 59 player in the country, the No. 4 offensive tackle and the No. 2 player in the state of Pennsylvania.

Before Franklin was fired, Spell had already made clear that he was not fully committed to the Nittany Lions, and OSU had been recruiting the talented running back.

Since he decommitted, Spell told On3 that eight schools stand out to him, listing Florida State, Georgia, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Notre Dame, Ohio State, Tennessee and USC.

Spell is considered the No. 7 player in the country and the No. 1 running back. Andrew Ivins, the director of scouting at 247Sports, is very high on Spell.

"A mix between a tank and a jackrabbit, which is an extremely difficult combination to tackle," Ivins' scouting report reads. "A naturally low-to-the-ground runner with true workhorse capabilities as he constantly bounces off defenders or cuts around them to find extra yardage. ... Frequently thrashes forward at the first sign of contact and almost always seems to be falling forward."

Looking at Spell's stats, there is no reason to doubt Ivins' praise. As a sophomore in 2024, Spell ran the ball 157 times for 1,681 yards (10.7 yards per carry) and 24 touchdowns. In the playoffs, he had two games in which he rushed for 280 yards and 274 yards to help lead his team to a Class 4A championship.

Most recently, Spell put together a game in his junior season in which he scored six total touchdowns, which included an 86-yard punt-return score. He finished the game with

17 carries for 237 yards and four touchdowns on the ground, with a 66-yard touchdown reception as well. His previous high of scores in a game was five, which he did in this season's opener.

The Buckeyes remain in a good spot with Chattanooga (Tenn.) Baylor School five-star running back David Gabriel Georges (6-0, 205) but will likely remain in close contact with both him and Spell. Gabriel Georges is the No. 20 player in the country and the No. 2 running back.

Ohio State is also in on Jenkins, who will take an unofficial visit to Columbus on Nov. 15 for the game against UCLA. He doesn't yet have an offer from OSU but could very well receive one that weekend when he is on campus.

Jenkins is considered the No. 240 player in the class, the No. 26 safety and the No. 11 player in the state of Pennsylvania.

Taylor has also planned an unofficial visit to Ohio State. He will be on campus for the Nov. 1 game against Penn State. Taylor is considered the No. 55 player in the country and the No. 11 wide receiver and also doesn't have an offer from the Buckeyes yet.

Four-Star Timmons To Take OV To OSU

The Buckeyes are making another push for a 2026 flip, targeting Gibsonia (Pa.) Pine-Richland four-star cornerback Jay Timmons (5-11, 185), who is committed to Florida State.

Timmons pledged to the Seminoles on June 24 after taking an official visit to Tallahassee, Fla., just four days earlier. Timmons was previously committed to Indiana since April 28 of this year before he first flipped.

Now Timmons has scheduled an official visit to get to Columbus on Nov. 1 for the game against Penn State. Currently, the Buckeyes have just Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic four-star cornerback Jordan Thomas (6-1, 185) pledged in the class at the corner position and have been looking to add to that this fall.

Timmons is the No. 163 player in the country, the No. 18 cornerback and the No. 4 player in the state of Pennsylvania. Part of the reason he chose Florida State could have been due to his father, Lawrence Timmons, playing at Florida State before playing 11 seasons in the NFL.

But Ohio State and cornerbacks coach Tim Walton are hoping they can do enough to pull Timmons away from the Seminoles before the early signing period in early December.

OSU Included On Top Lists

Ohio State was included on multiple narrowed-down scholarship lists for 2027 prospects since BSB last went to press.

Ramsey (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep three-star tight end JT Geraci (6-5, 230) was one player who had the Buckeyes included on a top-10 list. He also included Alabama, Auburn, Boston College, Florida, Notre Dame, Texas, Texas A&M, Tennessee and Vanderbilt on his list.

Geraci was first offered by the Buckeyes on June 9, when he was at a one-day recruiting camp in Columbus, and he is considered the No. 516 player in the country, the No. 27 tight end and the No. 14 player in the state of New Jersey.

Ohio State was also included on a top-10 list for Waxahachie, Texas, four-star safety JayQuan Snell (6-3, 198). The Buckeyes were included along with Alabama, LSU, Miami, Oklahoma, Ole Miss, Texas, Texas A&M, Texas Tech and Tennessee.

Snell's initial offer from the Buckeyes came on May 13. He is the No. 38 player in the country, the No. 4 safety and the No. 7 player in the state of Texas.

Snell broke out in his sophomore season with 86 tackles, one tackle for loss, one interception, a forced fumble and a fumble recovery in 13 games.

Buckeyes Make Offers

Ohio State offered more prospects since

BSB last went to press. Here is a look at the prospects the Buckeyes offered.

- **Memphis (Tenn.) Academy of Science and Engineering four-star defensive lineman Jamarkus Pittman (6-5, 350)** – A 2027 prospect, Pittman is the No. 91 player in the country, the No. 9 defensive lineman and the No. 5 player in the state of Tennessee. He holds 25 Division I offers, which includes Ole Miss, where he has been committed to since June 6. He is also a shot put thrower for track and field. Pittman finished his 2024 football season with 43 tackles, 15 tackles for loss and eight sacks.

- **Atlanta Woodward Academy cornerback Bryce Woods (6-2, 175)** – Woods is unranked in the 2027 class at this point but has 30 Division I offers, a list that includes Auburn, Georgia Tech, Michigan State, Missouri, North Carolina, Pitt, SMU and Tennessee, among many others. Through five games in 2025, Woods had 15 total tackles (10 solo), one tackle for loss and one pass defended, according to MaxPreps.

- **Garner, N.C., athlete Arosen Randle Jr. (6-3, 210)** – Randle is also unranked in the 2027 class but holds 19 Division I offers. He has offers from Duke, Georgia Tech, Michigan State, SMU and Tennessee, among others. Randle's mother is a former All-American Clemson track athlete, and his brother is former NFL linebacker Brandon Bouyer-Randle. Arosen Randle also runs track and was a state qualifier as a freshman.

- **Dickinson, Texas, cornerback Royce Bimage (6-0, 160)** – A 2028 prospect, Bimage is unranked and holds eight Division I offers from Arizona State, Arkansas, Houston, Louisville, Miami, Texas and Texas A&M, along with his new offer from the Buckeyes. His brother, Rodney Bimage Jr., is a cornerback at Arizona State.

- **Fulshear (Texas) Katy Jordan three-star defensive lineman Jimmy-Phrisco Alo-Suliafu (6-3, 265)** – Alo-Suliafu is in the 2026 class and is currently committed to

Continued On Page 30

2028 San Diego Five-Star Athlete Offered

Continued From Page 29

North Carolina. He finished his junior prep season with 70 total tackles, 15 tackles for loss, eight sacks, a forced fumble and a fumble recovery. That was after a sophomore season foot injury that limited him to just three games. Alo-Suliafu is the No. 612 player in the country, the No. 74 defensive lineman and the No. 82 player in the state of Texas.

- **San Diego Rancho Bernardo five-star athlete Gaige Weddle (6-2, 175)** – One of the top prospects in the 2028 class, Weddle holds 14 Division I offers already. That list includes Arizona State, Miami, SMU, Tennessee, USC, Utah, Vanderbilt and Washington. He is considered the No. 36 player in the class, the No. 1 athlete and the No. 2 player in the state of California and is being recruited by Guerrieri to be a safety for the Buckeyes. He is the son of six-time Pro Bowl safety Eric

Weddle.

- **Springfield, Tenn., four-star corner-back Jermaine Cobbins (6-1, 175)** – Cobbins is considered the No. 49 player in the 2028 class, the No. 4 cornerback and the No. 2 player in the state of Tennessee. He has 21 Division I offers, which include Florida State, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Nebraska, Ole Miss, Tennessee, Texas A&M and Vanderbilt. He plays on both sides of the ball for his prep team, doubling as a receiver. He had 22 catches for 450 yards and seven scores in seven games this season. On defense, he had 25 tackles (16 solo), a tackle for loss, one pass defended and two forced fumbles, according to MaxPreps.

- **Waukesha (Wis.) Catholic Memorial three-star defensive end Isaac Miller (6-5, 250)** – Miller is the No. 552 player in the 2027 class, the No. 43 defensive end and the No. 4 player in the state of Wisconsin and was

offered by defensive line coach Larry Johnson on Oct. 15. Miller has 18 Division I offers, which include Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Miami, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Ole Miss, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Brown visited Notre Dame for its 34-24 win over No. 20 USC on Oct. 18. Brown has remained committed to Ohio State since he pledged but has taken multiple other visits. However, after Brown committed to Ohio State, he posted an arm tattoo that reads “showtime,” his nickname, with the “O” being an Ohio State Block O. So Brown seems very committed to his decision.

- The Buckeyes were given a “crystal ball” by On3 to land flip candidate Tyrone (Ga.) Sandy Creek four-star running back

Amari Latimer (6-1, 220) in the 2026 class. He is considered the No. 380 player in the country, the No.24 running back and the No. 41 player in the state of Georgia. If he does flip from Wisconsin, where he has been committed for nearly four months, he would be the second running back in the Buckeyes’ 2026 class, joining Delaware (Ohio) Rutherford B. Hayes four-star Faour Akih (6-0, 190).

- The Buckeyes are a finalist for Hampton, Ga., four-star linebacker Kamarui Dorsey (6-3, 200), who is set to announce his commitment on Nov. 1. He is choosing between Florida State, Georgia Tech, Georgia, LSU, Texas A&M and the Buckeyes. Recruiting experts believe that the Aggies have the best chance at landing Dorsey. He is the No. 41 player in the 2027 class, the No. 5 safety and the No. 3 player in the state of Georgia.

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago — 1990

When asked what position star lineman Dan Wilkinson could play in college, Dayton Dunbar coach Tom Montgomery had a simple answer.

“Anywhere he wants,” Montgomery said.

The same could probably be said about which college Wilkinson would play for.

The 6-5, 290-pound senior had been a starter on the offensive line at Dunbar since his freshman year, and since midway through his sophomore year, he had also started at defensive tackle.

Montgomery said Wilkinson was just as proficient regardless of which side of the ball he lined up on.

“To me, he is the best I’ve ever had as a two-way tackle,” said the veteran Dunbar head coach. “He has tremendous speed. Last year, he ran a 4.9 in the 40, and he was lugging around 300 pounds. This year, he is so much quicker.

“I’ve talked to a lot of recruiters, and some say offense and some say defense. Whatever they take him as, they are going to get a good ballplayer. I guess it will depend on who wants him and what system they want to use.”

30 Years Ago — 1995

Kurt Murphy, DeSales’ 6-4, 280-pound center, issued a verbal commitment to Ohio State on Oct. 19. Murphy picked Ohio State over a host of other schools, including Notre Dame, Michigan, Penn State and Michigan State.

“I came to that decision on Sunday night (Oct. 15) when I talked to (OSU recruiting coordinator Bill) Conley. I talked it over with my parents, and they met with (head coach John) Cooper and Coach Conley as well.”

Murphy, rated the second-best center prospect in the country by Tom Lemming’s Prep Football Report, was looking forward to a chance to take over as OSU’s center after Juan Porter, a junior, departed.

“That’s what (the coaches) are saying right now, that I’ll have a chance to do that. But I’ll do whatever the coaches think is best,” he said.

DeSales coach Bob Jacoby, who also coached defensive lineman Luke Fickell and long snapper Dean Kreuzer, said Murphy meant at least as much to the Stallions as Fickell did.

“Kurt has meant every bit as much as Luke Fickell, and Luke Fickell has shown what he is capable of doing at Ohio State.”

25 Years Ago — 2000

Westerville South’s Lance Moore had emerged as central Ohio’s most prolific receiver, catching passes from Bishop Ready transfer Rocky Pentello.

Through eight games, Moore had caught 69 passes for 1,122 yards (16.3 average). He also had five interceptions and returned them for 159 yards. On the year, he had 17 touchdowns.

“Before the season, I don’t think anybody expected this would happen,” said Moore, a key member of South’s 6-2 team. “But after we started practicing and we started getting closer as a team and developing that chemistry, we knew everything was going to fall into place.”

As a result, schools were starting to take notice of Moore.

“I think they like my ability to get open and catch the ball,” he said.

He also played safety and returned punts and kicks.

“I would play defense if that was where I was needed at the college level,” Moore said. “I don’t have a problem with that.”

Moore attended Ohio State’s 27-17 win over Miami (Ohio) on Sept. 16.

“I haven’t talked to them lately, but I’ve been getting some letters,” Moore said. “I talked to (offensive coordinator Chuck) Stobart and Coach Conley at the game.”

20 Years Ago — 2005

Suitland, Md., linebacker NaVorro Bowman made an official visit to Ohio State for its 35-24 win over Michigan State on Oct. 15 and told BSB he thoroughly enjoyed his gameday experience.

“I thought it was great, from the morning to the night,” Bowman said shortly after returning home to Maryland. “It kind of looked like it was going to be close while the game was going on. But they pulled the win out.”

Bowman was hosted by true freshmen Doug Worthington and Maurice Wells for the weekend.

“I got along with them like they were from here, just like they were my normal friends,” Bowman said.

Rivals.com ranked Bowman the nation’s No. 11 inside linebacker. Watching A.J. Hawk turn in another magnificent performance, finishing with 19 tackles in the Buckeye win, Bowman envisioned himself doing the same for the Scarlet and Gray.

“I kind of thought I was out there,” he said. “A.J. played pretty well. He played just like the way I would be playing. He played excellent and really stepped up his game.”

15 Years Ago — 2010

Elyria defensive end Chase Farris was a four-star recruit rated the No. 10 defensive tackle in the nation by Scout.com. He had issued a verbal commitment on March 16 to the Buckeyes.

“After I went down for a visit, I realized it wouldn’t be too far for my mom to come and see me,” Farris told BSB in October. “If I needed to come home for anything, it’s only 2½ hours on the road. The academics are great, and so is the business school. That’s what I want to go into.”

Earning a chance to play at OSU was a high priority for both him and his high school coach, Steve Hamilton.

“He just loved it there,” Hamilton said. “That was one of our goals – to be able to get a scholarship to Ohio State. When he first started, he was getting some scholarships from other schools, and when he got one (from Ohio State), he came to me and said, ‘Coach Ham, we reached our goal.’ He was very excited, and I was very happy for him.”

Farris checked in at 6-6, 270 – a noticeable improvement from where he was as a freshman.

“He’s prepared himself,” the coach said. “When the young man was a freshman, he weighed almost 300 pounds, but it was all baby fat. You look at him now, and you wouldn’t even know there’s any fat on him. He’s got a pretty good build. He’s worked a lot to get to that point.”

10 Years Ago — 2015

Two of Ohio State’s biggest remaining targets at wide receiver in the class of 2016 hailed from Florida, and both were on hand for official visits when the Buckeyes hosted Penn State on Oct. 17.

Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas four-star Sam Bruce and Coconut Creek, Fla., four-star Binjimen Victor both made the trip to Columbus for the 38-10 win against Penn State. Bruce (5-8, 189) was the No. 18 wide receiver and No. 108 overall prospect, and Victor (6-4, 173) was the No. 6 receiver and No. 32 overall prospect.

Victor said the Buckeyes told him they’d like to use him the

same way they used wideout Mike Thomas. He had visited Ohio State multiple times and said he had a great relationship with the Ohio State staff.

“Urban Meyer is a hell of a coach who loves winning, and so do I,” Victor said. “I also feel like they have one of the best wide receiver coaches in Zach Smith. The program and training can get you to where you need to be in a couple of years.”

Five Years Ago — 2020

The NCAA Division I council had approved a proposal earlier in the summer that granted all fall student-athletes an extra year of eligibility regardless of whether they played the 2020 season or not. And though returning seniors would not count toward the next year’s 85-man scholarship limit if they decided to return for another season, head coach Ryan Day called the situation confusing because of how it impacted underclassmen and future recruiting classes.

“There’s a process, and it’s a long process,” Day said during a teleconference on Oct. 2. “It’s very confusing metrics that, boy, it took me about three hours to sit down with (director of player personnel) Mark Pantoni and figure it all out.

“It’s kind of a plus-one based on seniors and years of eligibility. It’s confusing. It’s not easy. But I don’t see us being over 85, even next fall, as I project it out.”

The Buckeyes – and all other Football Bowl Subdivision schools, for that matter – were required to be down to 85 scholarship players (excluding returning seniors in 2021) by the time fall camp rolled around.

One Year Ago — 2024

Cleveland Glenville four-star linebacker Cincere Johnson (6-3, 225) – to whom the Buckeyes offered a scholarship while he was on campus for the team’s 49-14 win over Marshall on Sept. 21 – told 247Sports that while he had not yet narrowed down a preferred list of schools, he was close to getting to that point, with the Buckeyes seemingly inching closer to that list.

“I talk on the phone with (linebackers coach James) Laurinaitis and (defensive assistant Josh) Chorba,” Johnson said. “It’s going great. We’re building our relationship. I’m watching their season unfold.”

During the off week, Day stopped at Glenville on Oct. 18 to see Johnson while the linebacker continued to add to his scholarship offers, a list that was up to 21 schools, including Florida State, Illinois, Michigan State, Missouri, Notre Dame, Penn State, Purdue, UCLA and Wisconsin.

Johnson was considered the No. 106 player in the country for 2026, the No. 8 linebacker and the fourth-best player in the state of Ohio after a sophomore season in which he had 121 tackles (four for loss) along with seven sacks and three forced fumbles while playing middle linebacker.

Johnson told 247Sports that he was already targeting another date for his next visit to Columbus, joining many other Buckeye recruits in coming to Ohio State for The Game on Nov. 30.

“I want to get back down there for the Michigan game,” Johnson said.

BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL (7-0)

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, W 34-0.
Nov. 1 PENN STATE; **8** at Purdue; **15** UCLA; **22** RUTGERS; **29** at Michigan.

MEN' BASKETBALL

Oct. 26 Ohio (Exh.).
Nov. 3 IU-INDY; **7** PURDUE-FORT WAYNE; **11** APPALACHIAN STATE; **16** NOTRE DAME; **20** WESTERN MICHIGAN; **25** MOUNT ST. MARY'S; **28** at Pittsburgh.
Dec. 6 at Northwestern; **9** ILLINOIS; **13** at Cleveland Hoops Showdown in Cleveland vs. West Virginia; **20** at CBS Sports Classic in Atlanta vs. North Carolina; **23** GRAMBLING STATE.
Jan. 2 at Rutgers; **5** NEBRASKA; **8** at Oregon; **11** at Washington; **17** UCLA; **20** MINNESOTA; **23** at Michigan; **26** PENN STATE; **31** at Wisconsin.
Feb. 5 at Maryland; **8** MICHIGAN; **11** USC; **14** at Nashville Hoops Showdown in Nashville, Tenn., vs. Virginia; **17** WISCONSIN; **22** at Michigan State; **25** at Iowa.
March 1 PURDUE, **4** at Penn State; **7** INDIANA; **10-15** Big Ten Tournament in Chicago.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Nov. 9 COPPIN STATE; **13** BELLARMINE; **16** at UConn; **19** KENT STATE; **24** at Pink Flamingo Championship in the Bahamas vs. Belmont; **26** at Pink Flamingo Championship in the Bahamas vs. TBD; **30** NIAGARA.
Dec. 7 at Northwestern; **11** NORTHERN KENTUCKY; **14** TOLEDO; **18** NORFOLK STATE; **22** WESTERN MICHIGAN; **28** UCLA; **31** at Purdue.
Jan. 4 RUTGERS; **7** at Illinois; **11** at Maryland; **14** PENN STATE; **19** at Coretta Scott King Classic in Newark, N.J., vs. TCU; **22** INDIANA; **25** at Iowa; **29** Wisconsin.
Feb. 1 NEBRASKA; **5** at Washington; **8** at Oregon; **15** MARYLAND; **18** at Minnesota; **22** USC; **25** MICHIGAN.
March 1 at Michigan State.

CROSS COUNTRY

Sept. 5 at Mike Baumer Classic in Dayton, Men 2nd/13, Women 1st/13; **12** at Spartan Invite in East Lansing, Mich., Men 3rd/16, Women 6th/17; **26** at Gans Creek Classic in Columbia, Mo., Men 2nd/26, Women 26th/31.
Oct. 17 Arturo Barrios Invite in College Station, Texas, Men 4th/32, Women 10th/37; **31** Big Ten Championships.
Nov. 14 NCAA Great Lakes Regional Championship in Evansville, Ind.; **22** NCAA Championship in Columbia, Mo.

FENCING

Oct. 11 OSU OPEN, NTS; **12** OSU

DUALS, M 4-0, W 4-0.

Nov. 8-9 OSU ELITE INVITATIONAL; **22-23** Western Invitational at USAF Academy, Colo.
Jan. 17 St. John's Invitational in Queens, N.Y.; **18** Dave Micahnik Penn Invitational in Philadelphia; **31** Schiller Duals in Evanston, Ill.
Feb. 1 Schiller Duals in Evanston, Ill.; **21-22** CCFC Championships in Granville, Ohio.
March 8 NCAA Midwest Regionals in Cleveland; **19-22** NCAA Championships in South Bend, Ind.

FIELD HOCKEY (7-6, 3-2)

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, L 4-3; **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 Inter-collegiate at Kettering, Ohio, 9th/14.

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 ICE HOCKEY (3-1)

Oct. 10-11 NORTHERN MICHIGAN, W 5-2; W 3-1; **17-18** at UConn, L 3-2, W 4-2; **24-25** SACRED HEART; **30-31** PENN STATE.
Nov. 14-15 at Wisconsin; **21-22** at Michigan; **28-29** at Arizona State.
Dec. 4-5 MINNESOTA.
Jan. 2-3 BOWLING GREEN; **9-10** MICHIGAN STATE; **23-24** at Notre Dame; **30-31** MICHIGAN.
Feb. 6-7 at Minnesota; **13-14** WISCONSIN; **20-21** at Penn State; **27-28** at Michigan State.
March 5-6 NOTRE DAME; **11-21** Big Ten Tournament.

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY (5-1-0, 3-1-0)

Oct. 3-4 at Colgate, W 5-3; W 9-4; **10-11** BEMIDJI STATE, W 6-0; W 2-1; **18-19** at Minnesota W 4-1; L 6-3; **24-25** ST. CLOUD STATE; **31** at St. Thomas.

Nov. 1 at St. Thomas; **14-15** MINNESOTA STATE; **21-22** at Minnesota-Duluth; **28** at D1 in DC Tournament in Washington, D.C., vs. Clarkson; **29** at D1 in DC Tournament in Washington, D.C., vs. Colgate.
Dec. 5-6 WISCONSIN.
Jan. 2-3 PENN STATE; **9-10** at St. Cloud State; **16-17** at Minnesota State; **23-24** ST. THOMAS; **30-31** MINNESOTA-DULUTH.
Feb. 5-7 at Wisconsin; **13-14** MINNESOTA; **20-21** at Bemidji State; **27-March 1** WCHA First Round.

MEN'S SOCCER (5-8, 2-5)

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, L 3-1; **18** MARYLAND, L 4-0; **24** at Washington; **31** PENN STATE.
Nov. 7 at Northwestern; **12** Big Ten Semifinals; **16** Big Ten Championship.

WOMEN'S SOCCER (7-2-6, 3-1-5)

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, W 4-2; **19** at Maryland, W 3-1; **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, L 3-1; **19** at Indiana, L 3-1; **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.

WRESTLING

Nov. 2 Clarion Open at Clarion, Pa.; **9** at Tennessee-Chattanooga; **15** National Duals Invitational at Tulsa vs. Wyoming; **20** KENT STATE.
Dec. 3 BELLARMINE; **12** NC STATE; **21** Collegiate Duals at Nashville, Tenn.
Jan. 4 at Oregon State; **11** INDIANA; **23** at Minnesota; **25** at Nebraska; **30** WISCONSIN.
Feb. 1 MICHIGAN; **6** IOWA; **13** at Penn State; **15** at Maryland.
March 7-8 Big Ten Championships at State College, Pa.; **19-21** NCAA Championships at Cleveland.



EL VAQUERO
MEXICAN RESTAURANT

3230 Olentangy River Road
Columbus, Ohio, 43202
(614) 261-0900
www.ElVaqueroRestaurants.com

EVERYDAY
HAPPY HOUR
4 pm-8 pm



\$5.00 OFF
your total bill of \$25 or more
Coupon valid only Sunday-Thursday. Excludes tax and alcohol. Dine-in and carry-out. One coupon per table. Not valid with any other offers. Valid at all locations with coupon. Expires 12/31/25

\$6.00 OFF
your total bill of \$30 or more
Coupon valid only Sunday-Thursday. Excludes tax and alcohol. Dine-in and carry-out. One coupon per table. Not valid with any other offers. Valid at all locations with coupon. Expires 12/31/25

IU's Cignetti Receives Eight-Year Extension

Amid speculation that Penn State would be making calls to try to hire Indiana head coach Curt Cignetti, the Hoosiers have signed the 64-year-old to an eight-year extension worth a reported \$11.6 million per year.

BIG TEN NOTES Sam Cipriani

The average annual value of the contract makes Cignetti the third highest-paid coach in the country behind Kirby Smart of Georgia (\$13 million per year) and Ryan Day (\$12.5 million per year).

Cignetti is in his second season with Indiana, going 11-2 in his first year with an appearance in the College Football Playoff. This season, the Hoosiers have improved and are up to No. 2 in the AP top 25 after beating Michigan State, 38-13, at Memorial Stadium.

"At Indiana University, we are committed to performing at the highest levels in everything we do, and no one has exemplified that more than Coach Cignetti," said Indiana University President Pamela Whitten. "Put simply, Cig is a winner. From last year's College Football Playoff appearance to this year's top-three national ranking,

the IU football program's success has been tremendous. Curt and Manette Cignetti are home in Indiana, and we are delighted that the Cignetti family will be Hoosiers for many years to come."

Cignetti was the Big Ten and national Coach of the Year last season after turning the Hoosiers around, and now he will be in Bloomington through the 2033 season.

The Buckeyes don't have Indiana on the schedule in the regular season, but they currently share the conference lead with the Hoosiers. The two could meet in the Big Ten Championship Game on Dec. 6 in Indianapolis.

This is already the second extension Cignetti has received in his two seasons at Indiana, reflecting how well he has done in turning the program around as quickly as he has.

Though Cignetti expressed excitement about reaching an agreement with Indiana, he said he was even more pleased that the deal was finalized early, allowing the Hoosiers to shift their full focus to their Oct. 18 matchup with Michigan State.

"I'm glad we got this done," Cignetti said. "I think it's good for the program and good for me and our team to have this behind us, so we can focus on what we have



Curt Cignetti

to get done. Because people like to talk about trap games and things of that nature, and especially when you come off a big win (Indiana upset Oregon at Oregon), how hard it is to come back and win after a big win."

Indiana beat the Spartans 38-13 in the first game after Cignetti's extension, improving the team to 7-0 (4-0 Big Ten).

PSU AD Explains Franklin Firing

After Penn State's firing of former head coach James Franklin, Nittany Lions athletic director Pat Kraft addressed various issues at his press conference on Oct. 13.

Kraft began with a statement about Franklin, highlighting his accomplishments during his time at the university and offering praise for him as both a coach and a person.

"Let me begin first by saying James Franklin is a tremendous man, husband, father, mentor to countless student-athletes and a good friend who has always carried himself with dignity and represented Penn State with absolute class," Kraft said. "Beyond the wins and the accolades, James has been a trusted ambassador for this university and a friend of the Penn State community. We are all incredibly fortunate to have had James Franklin lead our football program for over a decade, and we will be forever grateful to him and his family."

Franklin finished with a 104-45 overall record and an 8-7 record in bowl games, and he won a Big Ten championship in 2016. Franklin's 4-21 record against top-10 opponents, failure to reach a four-team College Football Playoff, and inability to capitalize on what many considered his most talented roster ultimately led to his downfall.

Kraft said he feels Penn State bringing in a new head coach will be the key to his goal of bringing the Nittany Lions a national championship.

"Ultimately, I believe a new leader can help us win a national championship, and now is the right time for this change," Kraft said.

For now, Penn State must rely on former cornerbacks coach and now interim head coach Terry Smith.

Kraft expressed confidence that the program will remain in capable hands under Smith's leadership, emphasizing the university's strong foundation and support network.

"We are blessed because of our fans, alumni and the support we receive that we can do more than most and that we have elite resources here," Kraft said. "So that allows us to be able to have real conversations and put our resources to the test in the best direction."

Alvarez Comments On Badgers Identity

Legendary Wisconsin head coach Barry Alvarez has spoken out about the current state of Badgers football.

On his weekly ESPN show on Oct. 13, Alvarez said that if he were in the shoes of head coach Luke Fickell, he'd call a staff meeting right away to confront what he

sees as a lack of identity within the program. Though he added that by this point in the season, it's too late to still be figuring those things out.

"I'd call a staff meeting immediately, and I'd address some things because it's too damn late now," said Alvarez. "How are you going to start establishing an identity? You're into the season. You're into conference play now. That has to happen during the offseason."

Alvarez's response came in the wake of Wisconsin junior linebacker Christian Alliegro's comments following the Badgers' 37-0 home loss to Iowa, stating that the team had a lack of identity.

"I feel like we really don't have an identity," Alliegro said. "You see that on the field. We still haven't found our identity."

This is the second time Alvarez has made critical comments regarding Wisconsin, although last time he came to the defense of the Badgers. Following Wisconsin's 27-10 loss to Maryland on Sept. 20, Alvarez stated that the program's fans were "spoiled rotten" and needed to be more grateful after they booed the team and head coach Luke Fickell throughout the game.

However, with Alvarez's most recent comments, it seems he may have changed his stance on the 2025 Badgers.

Wisconsin is now just 2-5 on the season, and 0-4 in the Big Ten after its loss to Ohio State on Oct. 18. The Badgers have lost by at least 14 points in each of the last five games and have yet to beat a team in the Power Four.

Rhule Addresses Penn State Rumors

With rumors swirling about Nebraska's Matt Rhule taking Penn State's vacant head coaching job, the Cornhuskers head coach took to the "Pat McAfee Show" on Oct. 16 to calm the stir of his potential departure.

Rhule said that he feels Nebraska is a "destination job" and that he is putting all his chips on the Cornhuskers going forward.

"I'm going all in on this place," Rhule said. "We can make this whatever we want. This is not a jumping job. This is a destination job. This is one of the greatest places in the world. I can do whatever I want here. I have a great young team."

Rumors sparked due to Rhule's extensive past with Penn State and Pennsylvania overall. Rhule played for the Nittany Lions as a linebacker from 1994-97 and served for a year as a graduate assistant following his playing career. His coaching tenure also includes 10 total years at Temple – six being in various assistant roles and four as its head coach – located in Philadelphia.

Rhule said that though he went to Penn State and has a lot of respect for Kraft, he feels he has something special brewing in Lincoln, Neb.

"When it's your alma mater, you have



Matt Rhule

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL TICKETS!

We have your seats to the season's hottest action!



For Your Ticket Connection Call:

DREAM SEATS
YOUR TOTAL TICKET SOURCE

1611 W. FIFTH AVE. COLUMBUS, OH 43212

(614) 340-8989

www.dreamseats.com

Home &
Away Games!

All NCAA & NFL
Games in Stock!

all events ★ all cities ★ all the time ★ all events ★ all cities ★ all the time ★ all events ★ all cities ★ all the time

BIG
2025 Standings

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Indiana	4	0	1.000	7	0	1.000
Ohio State	4	0	1.000	7	0	1.000
Oregon	3	1	0.750	6	1	0.857
USC	3	1	0.750	5	2	0.714
Iowa	3	1	0.750	5	2	0.714
Michigan	3	1	0.750	5	2	0.714
Minnesota	3	1	0.750	5	2	0.714
Northwestern	3	1	0.750	5	2	0.714
UCLA	3	1	0.750	3	4	0.429
Illinois	2	2	0.500	5	2	0.714
Nebraska	2	2	0.500	5	2	0.714
Washington	2	2	0.500	5	2	0.714
Maryland	1	3	0.250	4	3	0.571
Michigan State	0	4	0.000	3	4	0.429
Penn State	0	4	0.000	3	4	0.429
Rutgers	0	4	0.000	3	4	0.429
Purdue	0	4	0.000	2	5	0.286
Wisconsin	0	4	0.000	2	5	0.286

Oct. 17 game

Minnesota 24, Nebraska 6

Oct. 18 Games

Michigan 24, Washington 7
Northwestern 19, Purdue 0
Indiana 38, Michigan State 13
Ohio State 34, Wisconsin 0
Oregon 56, Rutgers 10
UCLA 20, Maryland 17
Iowa 25, Penn State 24
Notre Dame 34, USC 24

Oct. 25 Games

Michigan at Michigan State, TBA
Northwestern at Nebraska, TBA
Illinois at Washington, TBA
UCLA at Indiana, TBA
Wisconsin at Oregon, TBA
Minnesota at Iowa, 3:30 p.m.
Rutgers at Purdue, noon

Nov. 1 Games

USC at Nebraska, TBA
Penn State at Ohio State, TBA
Rutgers at Illinois, TBA
Indiana at Maryland, TBA
Purdue at Michigan, TBA
Michigan State at Minnesota, TBA

All times Eastern

U-M Board Opposes
Private Equity In B1G

With the Big Ten in discussions about a multi-billion-dollar private equity deal, Michigan has made its stance on the proposal public.

During a scheduled meeting on Oct. 16, the University of Michigan board of regents stated that it was opposed to the proposed 20-year, \$2.4 billion private equity deal made by the Big Ten.

Michigan regent Jordan Acker's comments at the meeting highlighted growing concern among university leaders that the conference's pursuit of private investment could shift priorities away from education and tradition, and toward profit and corporate influence – a move many fear could permanently alter the identity of college athletics.

"Enough is enough," Acker said. "The Big Ten is considering an infusion of cash from equity in exchange for a long-term share of our conference, our revenue, our future. How did a league made up of 16 public universities and two of our nation's most prestigious private universities get to this point? College sports are supposed to be about student-athletes. It's supposed to be rooted in communities and alumni and tradition and rivalries."

Mark Bernstein, the Michigan board of regents' chair, said the eight members of the board unanimously rejected the private equity deal, asking other Big Ten universities to do the same.

"The conference needs to slow down and consider better ways to address the very real problems facing some Big Ten universities and their athletic departments," Bernstein said. "But it is the job of a board, it's certainly the position of this board, to protect the future from the present. And that is why the U of M board opposes this private equity deal and urges other Big Ten universities to do the same."

USC, on the other hand, has yet to make a decision on its stance on the private equity proposal. However, a source with knowledge on the USC Board of Trustees said that multiple members of the board have expressed their concerns with both the up-front price of signing the deal and future conference revenue.

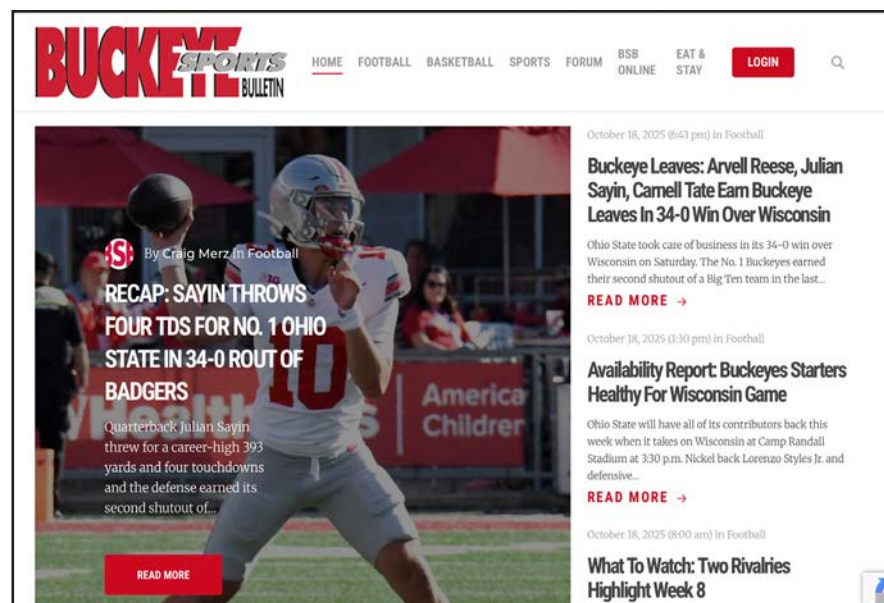
"We don't have any reason why we need to do this particular deal," said one university board member who requested anonymity.

In order for the proposal to pass, it must be a unanimous decision among all 18 Big Ten universities.

Big Ten Commissioner Tony Petitti's comments at the conference's basketball media day on Oct. 9 underscored that while the league is exploring potential avenues for financial growth, any decision regarding private equity investment will be made collectively. He added that the conference has put an emphasis on maintaining alignment among its member institutions and preserving the integrity of the league's long-term vision.

"Setting up a structure that can maximize that activity is important," Petitti said. "Whether or not we need a strategic investment to help us, we'll determine. But it will be done by all 18 leaders, and I think it's no different than looking at the other buckets that we have to maximize resources. It's one other avenue that may or may not be available to us."

SEE WHAT YOU'VE
BEEN MISSING ON
BUCKEYESPORTS.COM
Free To Print Subscribers



Buckeye Sports Bulletin has expanded its online presence to a full-service website to complement the 24 annual print editions. Access to BuckeyeSports.com is free to all print subscribers and includes numerous great features like:

- Daily features, analysis and breaking news stories
- A fan forum where readers can interact with the BSB staff and other subscribers while catching up on the latest Buckeye news
- Rosters, scholarship charts, schedules and commit lists for the football team to keep up to date with the Buckeyes
- Electronic versions of the BSB print editions
- The BSB Quickly archive

To sign up for this free service send an email to subscriptions@buckeyesports.com and we will send you easy-to-follow instructions on how to enjoy reading Buckeye Sports Bulletin online

Buckeyes Looking To Get Back To Big Dance

By GREG WILSON
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

After his first full season as head coach at Ohio State, Jake Diebler left disappointed without an appearance in the NCAA Tournament. Finishing with a 17-15 overall record (9-11 Big Ten), the Buckeyes fell short for the third straight season.

But that doesn't mean Diebler is lowering his expectations for his team this year.

"I don't apologize for having big expectations," Diebler said. "I've been very consistent with that from the day I got this job, much to the dismay of people who would say, 'You're setting the bar too high.'"

"Ohio State basketball belongs as one of the best programs in the country. But talking about it isn't enough. We've got a lot of work to do to get there."

The Buckeyes went into the portal again to try to attack some of the shortcomings that last season's team had, and Diebler feels much better about this team than he did about the squad he had last season, since he was able to bring in players who fit the way he wants to play.

"We targeted specific basketball characteristics in the portal to complement the guys that we had and also fit the way we want to play," Diebler said. "I feel like this team is able to be more like what we want to be as a program moving forward."

"I appreciate the fight, the sticking together, the scratching and clawing all the way to the end of last season, considering all the adversity we faced. But every year, you get a chance to adapt and change your roster, and I feel like we did a really good job with that."

Diebler named rebounding, allowing too many free throws and the Buckeyes' assist rate last season as their biggest problems as a team. He also said that he could tell early

on in practices this season that those things have seemed to improve.

Ohio State's season begins on Nov. 3 at Value City Arena when IU Indy comes to Columbus for a 6:30 p.m. tipoff. Buckeye Sports Bulletin has a position-by-position breakdown in alphabetical order of Ohio State's roster for the 2025-26 season – not counting walk-ons.

Forwards

Amare Bynum, 6-8, 240, Fr. – One of the most impactful players for Ohio State last season was John Mobley Jr., who was a true freshman. So Diebler has shown that he is going to play whoever is going to be able to help the team most on the floor.



Jake Diebler

The head coach said on Oct. 1 that Bynum has already started to show that he could be ready for the college game.

"He's had not just one or two high-level practices since June, but he's had multiple stretches of high-level basketball and productive basketball," Diebler said. "You can coach him hard. You can push him. He wants to get better, and he's eager to get better and he loves the game."

Bynum played well in the open practice the Buckeyes had on Oct. 4, including an impressive slam dunk he had in transition that showed off his explosiveness. He was a four-star prospect out of high school and the No. 61 overall player.

Diebler emphasized that the freshman is beyond his years when it comes to his approach to the game.

"I love coaching Amare," Diebler said. "He plays the game with a joy and eagerness to get better. That level of humility and consistency is rare for young players. He's certainly talented and has some great physical tools."

Brandon Noel, 6-8, 240, Sr. – Ohio State made multiple frontcourt additions

through the transfer portal last season that didn't work out the way they planned. Sean Stewart and Aaron Bradshaw both came into Columbus as former highly touted recruits without much experience in the college game.

With Noel, Diebler went the opposite route and went after experience. The fifth-year senior played three years at Wright State after taking two redshirts. In his final season with the Raiders, he averaged 19.0 points, 7.7 rebounds and 1.7 assists per game.

Noel projects to play a big role for the team this season, and with Devin Royal moving to the starting three, Noel will likely be the four when the Buckeyes are looking to stretch the floor.

He also gives the Buckeyes a little more size while still allowing them to play fast, which Diebler wants to do this season. But he should add a rebounding presence that was somewhat absent at times last season.

"Rebounding is definitely one of the most important things I do on the basketball floor," Noel said. "Probably more important than scoring. It never hurts to rebound well, and that's something that I'm going to aim to do here."

"I'm really just trying to do whatever is necessary. That could be offense, defense, shooting, rebounding. I'm just trying to be as versatile as I can and help the team in whatever way the coaches are asking. That's been the biggest goal for me."

Josh Ojianwuna, 6-10, 270, Sr. – Ojianwuna also adds size to the Buckeyes' roster, but since he is still going through the recovery process for an ACL tear he suffered in February when he was at Baylor, it's unclear when he will be available.

Ojianwuna said that he wants to do his rehab the right way so that when he comes back, he is ready to go at 100 percent.

"I'm just taking it step by step. I'm not in a rush," Ojianwuna said. "I'm just attacking my rehab every day. I take that as my own practice every day."

At the Oct. 4 open practice, Ojianwuna was not participating in any drills and sat on the bench the entire time, so he still has some time to go in his recovery.

But when he does come back, Ojianwuna will be a welcome addition to the frontcourt depth after averaging 7.4 points and 6.4 rebounds in the 23 games he played at Baylor last season.

There is a possibility that Ojianwuna isn't ready this season for the Buckeyes and could take a medical redshirt to retain one more season of eligibility.

Devin Royal, 6-6, 230, Jr. – Royal's improvement early last season was a huge help to an Ohio State roster that ended up lacking the depth that it desperately needed.

At the four spot, Royal was able to average 13.7 points – the second-highest total on the team, while adding 6.9 rebounds per game, tops on the club. But now, as part of Diebler's effort to get bigger as a team, the 6-6 Royal is moving from the four spot to start as the three for the Buckeyes. Diebler was confident over the offseason that it would be a move that Royal will be able to make successfully.

"He can do it," Diebler said. "The one

2025-26 OSU Men's Basketball Schedule

Date	Opponent
Oct. 26	Ohio (Exh.)
Nov. 3	IU-Indy
Nov. 7	Purdue-Fort Wayne
Nov. 11	Appalachian State
Nov. 16	Notre Dame
Nov. 20	Western Michigan
Nov. 25	Mount St. Mary's
Nov. 28	at Pittsburgh
Dec. 6	at Northwestern
Dec. 9	Illinois
Dec. 13	West Virginia*
Dec. 20	North Carolina#
Dec. 23	Grambling State
Jan. 2	at Rutgers
Jan. 5	Nebraska
Jan. 8	at Oregon
Jan. 11	at Washington
Jan. 17	UCLA
Jan. 20	Minnesota
Jan. 23	at Michigan
Jan. 26	Penn State
Jan. 31	at Wisconsin
Feb. 5	at Maryland
Feb. 8	Michigan
Feb. 11	USC
Feb. 14	Virginia^
Feb. 17	Wisconsin
Feb. 22	at Michigan State
Feb. 25	at Iowa
March 1	Purdue
March 4	at Penn State
March 7	Indiana
March 10-15	Big Ten Tournament in Chicago

* - Cleveland Hoops Showdown, Cleveland
- CBS Sports Classic, Atlanta
^ - Nashville Hoops Showdown, Nashville, Tenn.

thing about Devin, he's got a really high basketball IQ, and at the end of the day, he's going to find a way to be productive. He's always done that in his entire career at every level."

Royal believes the change is going well for him and that it's the best move for the team and for his future as a basketball player with NBA aspirations. Royal also believes that it's his responsibility to be somewhat of a leader for the Buckeyes and make sure the team brings the energy needed to be successful every day.

"I think it's a big responsibility of mine to bring the energy and set the tone," he said. "Make sure people aren't just playing around just for the fun of it and making sure they're working hard and trying to get better every day."

Royal improved from beyond the arc last season, shooting 35.3 percent over the final 17 games of the Buckeyes' 2024-25 season. He feels like that will bleed into this season after the extra work he has been able to put into his shot.

"I feel like it's going to come along great," he said. "I feel like last year, I had a role going in there and rebounding because we didn't have a lot of bodies in there. So I feel like the more attempts I get, the more times I'm going to make it, for sure."

Colin White, 6-6, 220, So. – White was not able to make much of an impact last season as a freshman. He wasn't as ready as Mobley was in his first year to contribute,

TAVERN FOOD & BREWS WITH
WITH BIG TEN ENERGY.

JOIN US FOR DRINKS, APPS & FOOTBALL
at any of our 10 Columbus locations!

OR ORDER GAME DAY GRUB TO-GO AT MYRUSTYBUCKET.COM

2025-26 Ohio State Men's Basketball Projected Starting Lineup

2 • Bruce Thornton • G Ht: 6-2 • Class: Sr.  Returning for fourth season with OSU after recording team highs in points (17.7), assists (4.6) and minutes (36.2) per game last year.	0 • John Mobley Jr. • G Ht: 6-2 • Class: So.  Broke out as a freshman for 13.0 points per game, making 77 of 200 shots from beyond the three-point line (38.5 percent).	21 • Devin Royal • F Ht: 6-6 Class: Jr.  Moving to the three position for OSU this season after spending last year at the four and averaging 13.7 points per game, second most on the team.	14 • Brandon Noel • F Ht: 6-8 • Class: Gr.  Transferred to Ohio State over the offseason from Wright State, where he averaged 19.0 points and 7.7 rebounds per game as a junior.	13 • Christoph Tilly • C Ht: 7-0 • Class: Sr.  Adds size to Buckeye lineup after transferring from Santa Clara, where he spent three seasons and averaged 12.5 points and 4.9 boards per game last year.
--	--	---	---	---

and an injury down the stretch – which he ended up getting surgery for over the offseason – forced him in and out of games.

Now almost fully recovered, White hopes to be a bigger part of the Buckeye game plan in the 2025-26 season after averaging 1.1 points and 1.1 rebounds last season in the 19 contests he made it into. He believes his ability to play fast-paced basketball will make that happen.

“I’ve loved playing fast ever since high school,” White said. “We played a little bit quicker in my junior and senior years. Helping the team win is obviously the first goal, but as far as playing faster, I feel like that fits into my game, being able to spread the floor and get guys open shots.”

White will likely be ready to go by the time the Buckeyes’ season officially begins. He was nearly a full participant in the open practice on Oct. 4, taking part in the 5-on-5 intrasquad the team played.

Guards

Taison Chatman, 6-4, 190, So. – Chatman is in his third season at Ohio State, but he hasn’t had a chance to make an impact on the team yet due to injury issues he has dealt with over the last two years.

A meniscus injury he dealt with in high school in 2022 required a second procedure in October of 2023, cutting his freshman season short with the Buckeyes. Then he suffered a torn ACL during summer workouts before the 2024-25 season and had to miss the entire year.

Now, coming into this year, Chatman is fully healthy and ready to contribute for the

first time. But Diebler warned that, while the talent is undoubtedly there for Chatman, he wasn’t able to work on his game much since he was more focused on rehab.

“His health is great,” Diebler said. “He’s been so consistent from last spring that I forget sometimes what he’s gone through in the last couple of years. I think it’s important to remember that he’s yet to have a true freshman kind of year. We experience some of those young player mistakes at times, but the biggest thing is he’s gifted with the ball in his hands.”

Chatman was the No. 39 overall player in the 2023 recruiting class, so the potential is still there. He could be a major addition to an Ohio State team that struggled with depth last season and needed Bruce Thornton, Mobley and Royal to shoulder a large workload.

Defensively is where Chatman’s game could be lacking, according to Diebler.

“He’s got to continue to get better with some of the physicality and the pace of the game, particularly on the defensive side,” Diebler said. “As that continues to get better, it just raises the potential of the impact he can have.”

Gabe Cupps, 6-2, 180, So. – Cupps transferred to Ohio State from Indiana. A four-star prospect out of Centerville, Ohio, he wasn’t able to make much of an impact in his two seasons with the Hoosiers.

He played in just four games last season due to an injury he suffered, and he feels that he will be able to reach his potential on the floor with OSU.

“Coming back from injury, I feel like I

see the game in a very different way,” Cupps said over the summer. “And I think all players do once they’ve had more time to just kind of watch the college game, especially being in it. But I think now I’m much more comfortable playing freely with who I think I am and the player that I want to be.”

Cupps played in 33 games as a freshman and started 22 of them due to an injury to then-senior guard Xavier Johnson. He averaged just 2.6 points, 1.2 assists and 0.7 steals per game while shooting 35.9 percent from three.

Cupps will provide depth behind Thornton and Mobley this season, which could prove to be important so that the two starters won’t be worn down come tournament time.

Cupps believes his biggest improvements over the offseason have been more mental than anything else.

“I would just say my mentality,” Cupps said about where he feels he has grown the most. “Playing freely and more confidently has been the biggest thing. I feel like I’ve just been able to let all the work that I’ve done show and come to fruition.”

Mathieu Grujicic, 6-7, 210, Fr. – Grujicic was the last commitment of the Buckeyes’ 2025 freshman class. He spent most of last year playing for FC Barcelona II, for which he averaged 12.9 points, 4.9 rebounds and 2.0 assists per game.

Grujicic said it was the fact that Diebler and the rest of the coaching staff were looking to win right away that brought him to Ohio State.

“I was in touch with different colleges,

and I could feel the sense of urgency that Coach Diebler and his staff had since the beginning,” Grujicic said. “And knowing that I could play for a school as prestigious as Ohio State, that was also something I was looking forward to, instead of going mid-major first.”

But since he hadn’t played any college basketball and wasn’t able to participate in summer workouts with the Buckeyes since he was playing with his U18 national team in Germany, the game was a bit fast for him when OSU started practicing this season.

“The game is starting to slow down for him,” Diebler said. “The pace that we’re playing at is different. It’s not what he’s used to. It’s a different game than what he was playing overseas. But I’ve been really impressed by how much he’s improved in understanding what we’re doing and limiting the turnovers that he had in the first couple of days of practice.”

Diebler understands that there will be a learning curve for Grujicic for those reasons but said the freshman is making good progress already.

“We’re viewing things through a lens of everyone being here since June. He was around, but couldn’t participate,” Diebler said. “Then he missed stretches because he was with his national team. I’ve been really impressed with the progress he’s made so far.”

Myles Herro, 6-3, 165, Fr. – A late addition to the 2025 recruiting class, Herro was rated the No. 364 player in the country and the No. 45 point guard out of Milwaukee

Continued On Page 36



SCORE BIG THIS SEASON!

CALL US TODAY FOR A
FREE ESTIMATE
(614) 268-3933



The Touchdown Package

80% Efficiency Furnace
Up To 3 Ton Air Conditioner
FREE Smart Thermostat

\$8,120

The MVP Package

90% Efficiency Furnace
3 Ton Air Conditioner
FREE Smart Thermostat

\$8,966

**The price listed is for a standard system replacement. Additional costs may apply if your specific installation requires extra materials or modifications to meet current code requirements.

Thornton's Goal Is To Make NCAA Tournament

Continued From Page 35

Whitnall High School.

There, he averaged 21.5 points, 5.9 rebounds and 4.7 assists per game while shooting 49.0 percent from the floor as a senior.

He is the younger brother of Miami Heat All-Star guard Tyler Herro, but he said that he tries not to take too much from his older brother, instead trying to be himself when he's on the court.

"I just try to be my own self and create my own path," Herro said. "I would say (Tyler Herro) is a scorer. He's obviously going to pass too, but I think I'm a pass-first guard and a true point guard."

It's unlikely that Herro will play much of a role for this year's team, but the experience he will get behind Thornton and Mobley will likely prove to be valuable for the freshman guard.

John Mobley Jr., 6-2, 185, So. – Forced into a starting role just 10 games into his college career, Mobley shone in his first season with the Buckeyes. He finished the year as the fourth-leading scorer on the team, averaging 13.0 points per game while adding 2.2 assists and 1.5 rebounds.

Diebler believes the experience that Mobley got playing so much in the Big Ten schedule will prove extremely valuable this season. The head coach believes the experience level was one of the bigger issues the

Buckeyes had last season.

"When you look at the main part of our rotation last year, we lacked experience," Diebler said. "Even our sophomores last year didn't have the type of experience as freshmen that Juni Mobley had as a freshman last year."

Mobley made more three-pointers than any Buckeye last season, on 77-of-200 shooting (38.5 percent) from beyond the arc. The sophomore wants to improve his game this season but is also trying to have more of a voice in the locker room.

"Having a little voice this year," Mobley said in June about where he is looking to improve. "I had experience last year. I've got more respect (from my teammates) than I did last year, so just having more of a voice."

But while Mobley shot well most of the season, his 5-of-21 performance in the final two games of the season is still sticking with him. One more win may have been enough to get the Buckeyes into the NCAA Tournament, and Mobley is well aware.

"Every time I watched it, all I could think about was that one game. We needed to beat Iowa (in the Big Ten tournament)," Mobley said. "That still motivates me now. I didn't have the game that I wanted or expected, but it's definitely a motivator."

Bruce Thornton, 6-2, 215, Sr. – Thornton is in his final year of eligibility, and he chose, once again, to stick with the Buckeyes despite missing out on the NCAA Tour-

nament in each of his first three years.

He is using that fact as motivation to get Ohio State back to the Big Dance rather than chasing it somewhere else. He is trying to get there by both making his own improvements and trying to help the rest of the team get better around him.

"He's been unbelievable," Diebler said. "He seems to be playing lighter, in a figurative way. He's competing at a high level, and he's even talking a little trash at times. He just seems laser-focused on this team getting better each and every day, and he's taking ownership of that."

Thornton was the team leader last year with 17.7 points per game while adding 4.6 assists and 3.4 rebounds, earning himself a spot on the All-Big Ten second team.

But Thornton and Diebler aren't satisfied with the personal numbers and accolades that the senior has been able to rack up. They are both more focused on the team goals and how Thornton can help get them there.

"He and I have talked, and we're not satisfied with just how he did personally last year. We both have big goals for this team," Diebler said. "But even for him personally, continuing to raise his level and finding a way to get better. I mean, he was an unbelievable player last year, but he wasn't perfect. He's still got some room to grow."

Diebler also believes the players around Thornton are improving, and the roster additions the Buckeyes made will also help Thornton be a better overall player this year, even with how well he played last season.

"We have more playmaking this year than we did last year, which can take some of the load off him. We have other guys who can find some ways to give Bruce an easier basket that he doesn't have to create for himself in such a difficult way."

Centers

Ivan Njegovan, 7-2, 260, So. – Diebler wanted to add some size to the Buckeye ros-

ter this season, and he did, but some size also returned with Njegovan coming back for his sophomore season.

As a freshman, the Croatian center played in 21 games, getting just under six minutes per game, and averaged 1.6 points and 1.5 rebounds. With Christoph Tilly added to the frontcourt this season, Njegovan still won't likely have a major role for the Buckeyes, but his limited experience last year should give him a good benchmark for when he gets into games this year.

He didn't start playing basketball seriously until he was 16 years old, so there still could be some meat on the bone for Njegovan. Diebler is likely hoping that is the case for the sophomore, because until Ojaniwu comes back – if he does this season – Njegovan could be the backup to Tilly when Ohio State wants to put a bigger lineup on the court.

His experience in Diebler's system will certainly be helpful, especially since this off-season was his first full one with the Buckeyes after he came from overseas last year.

Christoph Tilly, 7-0, 240, Sr. – One of Ohio State's most important transfer portal additions, Tilly came to Columbus after three seasons with Santa Clara and provides more of the size that the Buckeyes were looking for.

At Santa Clara, Tilly was a solid inside presence in his sophomore season with 9.4 points and 4.5 rebounds per game, shooting 55.2 percent from the field. He improved on those numbers as a junior with 12.5 points per game and 4.9 rebounds.

But as a junior, Tilly also started pulling up from beyond the arc more, making 17 of 54 shots from three-point range (31.5 percent). Diebler believes that Tilly can expand on that part of his game and help the Buckeyes spread the floor while remaining big.

"He's figuring out where he's comfortable," Diebler said. "The beautiful thing about this team is that he can be the best version of himself. The way that we're playing, he fits perfectly into the system. His production is going to be important. His minutes are going to be there. And his leadership and how he leads is equally important."

Tilly made a few three-pointers at the open practice on Oct. 4 and has been able to stretch the floor well. He was very comfortable pulling up when he had an open shot and seemed to be ready to pull the trigger whenever he had the chance.

"It's more threes than he's used to," Diebler said. "It's putting the ball on the ground more than he's used to. But you're going to see him score at multiple levels, and I think that really puts the defense in a bind."

Tilly is excited to share a court with Thornton and Mobley since the two are scoring threats of their own, which will open up the offense more for Tilly to be a factor.

"It opens up everything," Tilly said. "It makes scoring easier for me, but also, when I score, it makes it easier for them. It's been fun playing with those two guys, but also all of the other guys. We have good chemistry already, and we've been playing really well together."

- NFL Ticket
- So Many HD, Flat-Screen TVs!
- Friendliest Staff
- GREAT Food

Shade on the Canal
19 S. High St.
Canal Winchester
614-837-9873

Shade on 30th St.
850 S. 30th St.
Heath
740-788-9287

Shade on State St.
994 E. State St.
Athens
740-566-1009

Caron Makes Good Impression In Any Language

When Félix Caron skated onto the Value City Arena ice for his first game with Ohio State on Oct. 10, he admitted to nervousness because he wanted to make a good impression after the forward transferred from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

The Terrebonne, Quebec, native didn't disappoint. He scored two goals and had two assists in a 5-2 win against Northern Michigan to become the first Buckeye with four points in the first game of the season since at least 1999-00.

He followed the next night with an empty-net goal to seal a 3-1 win against the Wildcats. His five-point series earned him the Big Ten's second star of the week.

"To come here and score my first weekend, my home opener, it feels really good," he said on Oct. 15. "It's obviously nice. I got to show the fans what I'm capable of. I think I did pretty well last weekend. I just want to keep playing my game and keep the streak going."

Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik was impressed by how quickly Caron adjusted to his new surroundings.

"He probably had a lot going through his mind," Rohlik said. "Leaving a program, coming here, lots of changes, new teammates. I think the summer was huge. Him being here for two months, voluntarily working out with our guys and our strength coach, really helped ease that, so he felt real comfortable as we started."

Caron did not have a point in the Buckeyes' series split at Connecticut on Oct. 17 and 18. They lost the opener 3-2 before winning 4-2.

That he could handle the anxiety surrounding his debut comes from a far more nerve-racking experience 10 years earlier.

Caron, 20, was a huge Montreal Canadiens fan growing up, as one would expect of a Quebecer. As a member of a kids fan club, his name was picked to skate around the Bell Centre rink waving a Canadiens flag before a home Stanley Cup playoffs game against the rival Ottawa Senators in front of more than 21,000 fans.

"That was something I'll remember the rest of my life, because the building was shaking, and that's your team," he said. "I'm still talking about that now, and I get chills."

"I was so nervous. What if I fall or something? No, it was really cool. The entire day I was there at the Bell Centre, and I got to skate before the game, like at 3 p.m. on the ice. The building was empty, but me and my friend just shot pucks."

Caron was also able to meet, sort of, star Canadiens defenseman P.K. Subban.

"He was standing there, like three minutes before they skated on the ice, and I went up to him and was, 'I'm one of your biggest fans here,' because I was," Caron said. "It was at the time that he was big in our community, big for our city. So he was my favorite player. When I went up to him and I said, 'I'm a fan

of yours' he probably didn't even care because he was going to play a playoff game, but that's something I'm going to remember for sure."

On His Own

Caron would go on to forge his own career. He left behind his family to head west to play two seasons for the West Kelowna (British Columbia) Warriors when he was 17.

Each player stays with a family there to make it feel like home as much as possible.

"It was hard for my mom and my dad and my sister," he said. "It was obviously hard because you've been at home 17, 18 years of your life. Mom's cooking, nothing beats that. So it was hard, but I think it was the best thing for me to do it, and now that I'm here, I'm glad I did it."

What made the transition more difficult was the language barrier. He was strictly a Francophone growing up, but he knew he needed more.

"When I decided to take the college path three years ago, that's when I decided I wanted to play juniors in British Columbia, so that's where I started speaking English," Caron said. "I remember my first couple of weeks there were hard. I couldn't speak a single word in English, so my billet there was really good to me. With them, they sat with me, and they were just trying to understand me and that's where I got better."

"And now I've been playing with English guys for about four years, so I'm getting used to it still. It depends on the day, but I think today I'm doing well, maybe tomorrow will be different. It's hard, but it's always nice to speak two languages. I think it's really useful."

He was third in the British Columbia Hockey League in goals (31) and points (69) in 54 games in his second season in 2023-24 before enrolling at RPI.

He had 21 points (six goals, 15 assists) in 35 games last season, but a coaching change prompted him to look elsewhere, and he entered the transfer portal.

"A couple of teams reached out, and when Ohio State reached out, it's been a dream for me to play Big Ten hockey for a few years now, since I know about college. So when Ohio State reached out, it was a no-brainer for me to come here."

Rohlik said the staff did their homework on Caron by talking to his previous coaches, watching video and doing a Zoom with him.

"We really try to reach out and start to get to know who he is and what he's all about," Rohlik said. "From Zoom calls, you found out in a hurry that he wants to be a player and how impressive he was to us."

Arriving from his two previous stops, where Kelowna had a population of 36,000 and the 8,000 students at RPI would almost fill the lower bowl of Value City Arena, it's been a bit of a culture shock.

"I get here and, oh my God, you see football is big here," he said. "Really, the sports community is huge. And there's way more students here, but it's fun."

"I've been here a while now, so I'm getting used to it. I never lived in a big city like Columbus, so I see a lot of people walking around campus every day. It's different, but I'm liking it."

Having sophomore forward Jake Rozzi (Kirkland) and freshman goalie Dawson

Labre (Les Cedres) from Quebec as well has made the transition smoother as well. Both speak French.

"I think it helps when you have someone that can kind of relate and speak the language and understand where you're from," Caron said. "I'm sure that's pretty healthy."

The three grew up in the same region and played in some of the same tournaments and leagues.

"It's amazing to be honest," Rohlik said. "Everybody says the hockey world is a small world, and at some point, everything comes around. And here we are with that they grew up like that, and the next thing you know, they're playing on the same team."

Conn Job

Riley Thompson helped the No. 16 Buckeyes salvage the series at No. 12 Connecticut. His goal at 14:35 of the third period broke a 2-2 tie in the second game, and James Hong added an empty-net score at 18:46 for OSU

(3-1-0) in a 4-2 win.

Max Montes scored his second goal of the series to even the score at 1-1 in the second period, and Jake Dunlap put OSU ahead at 17:06 of the middle period. The Huskies (2-2-0) tied it early in the third.

Kristoffer Eberly made 34 saves for the Buckeyes in the game in Hartford, Conn.

The previous night in Storrs, Conn., he stopped 26 shots, but the Buckeyes fell behind 3-1 before a goal midway through the third period by Thompson brought the score to the 3-2 final.

Ohio State's four-game homestand begins with Sacred Heart on Oct. 24 (6:30 p.m.) and 25 (5 p.m.). The Big Ten schedule starts with Penn State on Oct. 30 and 31. Both games are at 6:30 p.m.

For a complete recap of the UConn series, go to the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.

Ohio State Fans!



**Weekly September through November
Five times from January through mid-March
Biweekly mid-March through mid-May
Monthly December, June through August**

Some Ohio State sports fans need more information on the Buckeyes than they can find in their local newspaper. Buckeye Sports Bulletin is for those fans. By subscribing to Buckeye Sports Bulletin, they receive 24 issues a year featuring:

- In-depth coverage of all Ohio State sports
- The latest comments from coaches and players
- The latest in recruiting information
- Personality profiles
- Features on former Buckeye greats
- Rosters, schedules, statistics, photos
- Check us out on the Web at www.BuckeyeSports.com



- ☐ 1 Year, \$124.95
☐ 2 Years, \$199.95

- ☐ 1 Year, First Class Mail, \$209.95
☐ 2 Years, First Class Mail, \$359.95

I want to know more about Ohio State sports. I am enclosing \$ _____

☐ Money Order ☐ Check ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Discover ☐ Amer. Express

Credit Card # and Exp. Date _____

**Credit Card Orders Accepted 24 Hours A Day
Call (614) 486-2202 or (800) 760-2862**

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

**Mail To: Buckeye Sports Bulletin
P.O. Box 12453
Columbus, Ohio 43212
www.BuckeyeSports.com**

Heisman Trophy Talk? Start With Sayin

Isn't it time we started talking about Julian Sayin for the Heisman Trophy?

He's the second-rated passer in the country. He's never lost a game. And he's the quarterback for the No.1-ranked team in the nation.

EXNER POINT Rich Exner

What he lacks is that so-called Heisman moment, that memorable play. But what he does is win, and efficiently so. And he's doing all this in a year when there isn't that obvious, spectacular choice available.

The midseason discussion should be about two people for the award: Sayin and Indiana quarterback Fernando Mendoza.

Mendoza has the edge over Sayin on top of the country for passing efficiency. They are one and two. Mendoza has been doing it with less talent around him. Yet they are neck and neck, statistically. Sayin is nearly seven points higher in completion percentage. Mendoza has two more TD passes.

There's more reason now for serious debate between the two for the award, since Miami's Carson Beck pretty much took himself out of the race with his four-interception performance in Miami's loss at home to Louisville. You heard that right. Beck was intercepted four times by Louisville. Louisville, I say.

Yes, there has been a lot of talk in Ohio State circles about Jeremiah Smith for the Heisman. No debate from me about Smith's talent. Smith is Ohio State's best offensive player. And he just might be the most talented offensive player in the country.

But circumstances are what they are this year. He hasn't (yet) put up huge numbers, and so far at least, he hasn't had those spec-

tacular one-handed grabs like he did last year.

Smith does lead the Buckeyes in receptions (49), receiving yards (602) and touchdown receptions (seven) through seven games.

However, for a receiver to win this award – and there definitely are flaws in the voting for the Heisman – he has to be dominant either in the numbers or on the highlight reel.

By all accounts, Smith is responsible for opening up so many things on the Ohio State offense because of the attention he draws. There's almost always a safety backing up the corner on Smith's side of the field. But those types of things don't usually result in Heisman votes.

So, for an alternative, I give you Sayin. Sayin has been near perfect.

He's completed 156 of 195 passes for a nation-leading 80.0 percent. His passer rating, if it holds, will be the best ever for an OSU quarterback. He's thrown 19 touchdown passes vs. three interceptions. And he hasn't been intercepted in the last four games.

Having said all this, much can happen over the seven weeks to make someone, including Sayin and Mendoza, the choice.

Voters would be wise to hold on to their ballots as long as possible. They're not due until Dec. 8, the Monday after league championship weekend.

By then, we just might have seen Sayin and Mendoza face off in the Big Ten title game. We might see a bunch of dynamic, Heisman-like plays by Smith. We might see someone else, somewhere else, emerge as truly spectacular.

But at this point, mid-October, I'm just Sayin the Ohio State sophomore quarterback should be getting strong consideration.

Low Blood-Pressure Games

Text exchange during the Wisconsin game:

Old college roommate: "We are spoiled."

Me: "It's like a pro team playing a college team."

Old roommate: "It does seem like that."

It might be boring at times, but Buckeye fans should savor the relaxation and admire the comfort of watching such an awesome collection of players and coaches roll through September and October without being threatened a single time.

Not since Texas, back in August, has there been a time when OSU's win was threatened. And that only came in the last few minutes of the game after a dominating defensive performance until that point.

A naysayer might point to the competition – Texas (5-2), Grambling (4-3), Ohio U. (4-3), Washington (5-2), Minnesota (5-2), Illinois (5-2) and Wisconsin (2-5).

Three points on that.

Only Wisconsin among the opponents has a losing record.

Only the Texas game has been close.

Everyone else in the country has either been losing or winning some close games, often against lesser opponents than those on OSU's schedule.

Take just this past week's games.

Previously undefeated and second-ranked Miami lost to Louisville at home. This was a Louisville team that previously lost to Virginia. And Miami barely got by Florida State (now 3-4), 28-22, the previous week.

No. 4 Texas A&M remained unbeaten, but only after beating 2-5 Arkansas in a nail-biter, 45-42.

No. 5 Ole Miss lost to Georgia, 43-35, ending a perfect season.

No. 7 Texas Tech lost to unranked Arizona State (5-2), 26-22, also ending a perfect season.

And No. 10 LSU lost for the second time, falling to No. 17 Vanderbilt (6-1), 31-24.

Meanwhile, Ohio State cruised to victory, like the Buckeyes have been doing each week the last two months.

Even Indiana has had a couple of tight games, a 20-15 win over Iowa and a 30-20 win at Oregon – though the Oregon win on the road was especially impressive.

Reasonable Talk From Cignetti

Curt Cignetti gained attention for his bold, pointed statements during Indiana's rise last year. Remember: "I win. Google me."

But it was a more measured Cignetti whom I heard on the Joel Klatt podcast recently, with the type of comments that come from a winning, focused coach.

Of his expectations ahead of this season's win at Oregon, Cignetti said: "I was very confident going into the game. There's always a question about how you really are going to match up, because they are extremely im-

pressive on tape. Let's face it, against Ohio State and Notre Dame, we didn't do so hot (last season)."

On his persona a season ago: "Let's face it, I was kind of out there last year, publicly. When I got the job here, Day 1, there were a lot of things that kind of rubbed me the wrong way. ... I sort of had to be out there a little bit. I made some comments, let's face it, which were a little bit out of character for me. But I thought that's what this program needed. Someone to carry the flag. Lead the charge. Create the vision. Not afraid of the big boys. ... I feel like we established ourselves last year, and this year we can sort of focus in on coaching football."

And if you do Google him, you will see that just like Jim Tressel before Ohio State, Cignetti had quite an impressive college record, even if it wasn't at the highest levels.

He was 53-17 in six seasons at Indiana of Pennsylvania, 14-9 in two seasons at Elon and 52-9 in five seasons at James Madison. He's now 18-2 at Indiana.

Cignetti has never had a losing record.

This Week's Top 10:

1. Ohio State (7-0) – No question, especially now that Miami has removed itself from the mix for consideration at the top.

2. Indiana (7-0) – A clear separation over those below for Indiana at this point.

3. Texas A&M (7-0) – The Aggies deserve to be here at 7-0, largely on the strength of their win over Notre Dame. But I don't expect them to be here at the end of the regular season.

4. Oregon (6-1) – A tough call over Georgia and Alabama. I'm open to dropping the Ducks, even if they win the rest of their regular-season games. Fewer chances for impressive wins than the teams below.

5. Alabama (6-1) – Head-to-head matters, so I have 'Bama above Georgia.

6. Georgia (6-1) – Still believe this is the one school that can rival OSU for raw talent. Would be a scary playoff opponent.

7. Miami (6-1) – Still the likely ACC champion, but QB questions have surfaced.

8. Notre Dame (5-2) – Irish look like they're on a roll, and they have the most favorable schedule left, in large part because there is no possible league championship game.

9. Ole Miss (6-1) – This team played Georgia closer than I expected, losing 43-35. But where was the defense for either side?

10. Oklahoma (6-1) – Will know sooner than later about this team. Next up, in a row, are Ole Miss, Tennessee and Alabama.



1997 OSU Harley Davidson Wide-Glide
43,453 miles • \$10,000 OBO
Custom airbrushed pictures on both fuel tanks of all Ohio State Heisman trophy winners plus Woody Hayes.
Serious inquires only call (740) 334-2459.

Minelli's Pizza
A West Side Tradition
Since 1967

**1189 N. Wilson Rd.
(614) 279-3344
& Next Door Tavern**

Catch all the Ohio State action
Big Ten Network • NFL Sunday Ticket

You Don't Have To Be In Sayin To Vote For Julian

Anytime you shut out a Big Ten team on the road by a score of 34-0 as the Ohio State football team did at Wisconsin on Oct. 18, a lot of people contributed. This was certainly true in this case.

While it was a group effort, this game really belonged to Julian Sayin.

He has played well in all seven victories and seems to get better every week. But his performance against UW was above and beyond. He finished the game completing 36 of 42 passes for 393 yards and four touchdowns. That's an 85.7 percent completion rate. It's tough enough to complete nearly 90 percent of your passes when you throw just 20 times, but 85.7 percent of 42 passes? That's slinging it.

Coach Ryan Day and his offensive coordinator, Brian Hartline, keep saying that they are bringing the freshman Sayin along slowly. Did they finally let him cut loose, or is there even more yet to come? He is currently No. 1 in the country in completion percentage at 80.0 and No. 2 in passing efficiency at 189.7. His name dots most of the other passing lists.

His performance in Madison was so impressive that both of our columnists in this issue, Mark Rea and Rich Exner, have started touting Sayin for the Heisman Trophy.

"Isn't it time we started talking about Julian Sayin for the Heisman Trophy?" Exner asks on page 38.

"He's the second-rated passer in the country. He's never lost a game. And he's the quarterback for the No.1-ranked team in the nation.

"What he lacks is that so-called Heisman moment, that memorable play. But what he does is win, and efficiently. And he's doing all this in a year when there isn't that obvious, spectacular choice available."

In his column on page 3, Mark backs his case for Sayin winning the Heisman up with so many statistics that it made me dizzy trying to edit the column.

One thing that impressed me with Sayin's performance in Wisconsin was his mobility. I'm not talking about his running with the football. His long run against the Badgers was 8 yards, and his long for the season is 12. Running the football is not his forte. I'm talking about his ability to move around in the backfield and buy time for one of his many receiving options to come open.

Sayin's teammate, defensive end Caden Curry, believes that practicing against the outstanding Buckeye defense every day has helped the quarterback with his mobility.

"Obviously, he's good at getting out of the pocket, and he feels that pressure from us, I hope throughout practice," Curry said. "So, I'm glad to see him use those tools against other teams and see how it pays off for us."

As scary as the Ohio State offense is with the passing attack led by Sayin and his star receivers, Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate, that air attack would be even more lethal if the Buckeyes could get their ground game untracked. Instead, the rushing attack seems to be regressing. Ohio State had less than 100 yards rushing against the Badgers (98) and averaged just 3.5 yards a carry. The longest run for Ohio State in Madison was for 15 yards, by Isaiah West, supposedly the fourth-string back.

Ohio State's highest rushing total in conference action was in the league opener against Washington, with 149. Since then, the rushing total has come down each game, just as freshman phenom Bo Jackson's totals have come down each game. Jackson was down to 10 carries for 26 yards against the Badgers with a long of 7.

What's going on here?

Did we overestimate Jackson's ability based on his play against reserves from Grambling State and Ohio? I find that hard to believe because the coaches see him in practice every day and they

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

were the ones who promoted him to starter, though all of us were pulling for that move.

Is Ohio State's offensive line better at pass blocking than run blocking? The big guys have allowed just three sacks all season, but in Big Ten play they are paving the way for just 3.8 yards a carry. While that average may have worked in the days of Woody Hayes, it does not compare well with the numbers Ohio State is putting up through the air.

Fix that running game up and Ohio State could end up with one of the greatest offenses ever.

One thing Ohio State running backs do well is catch the football.

Against Wisconsin, Jackson had five catches for 57 yards and CJ Donaldson had three for another 26 yards. On the season, Jackson has 11 catches, fifth highest on the team, for a 10.4-yard average. Donaldson has eight catches, and James Peoples has six.

And if you really want to nitpick with a team that is 7-0 and ranked No. 1 in the country, there is always the special teams. Year after year, there always seem to be problems there. They've gone to special team coaching by committee, and that doesn't seem to be working any better than when Parker Fleming was in charge of the unit.

Real Quickly

Early in the season, there was a lively discussion on our Buckeyesports.com Forum about which game on the schedule might be a "trap game" this season. I can't recall which teams were the contenders, but now I fear that Penn State might be the trap game.

I have to think that Day and his coaches are reminding the team about the dangers that might be involved in this game.

- Jim Knowles may have struggled so far with his Nittany Lion defense, but he knows a lot about how Ohio State operates, and I know he would like nothing more than to help his team to an upset of the Buckeyes. That's another reason to take this game seriously.

- Curry was talking about the unity of the Ohio State defense under Knowles' successor, Matt Patricia.

"We are all so tight, and we're all so close together, and it's just a bond that we grow every week," Curry said. "And having Coach Patricia in there definitely has helped and kind of just helped us grow it faster. He's definitely brought himself into it, and we'd love to invite him, and he's just somebody that we are kind of bouncing back and forth with."

Was that a slap at Knowles, who was reportedly aloof from his players?

- And finally, did you ever think you would see so many empty seats in Camp Randall Stadium? Camp Randall is one of the meccas of college football, and it should be packed to the rafters.

Inniss On The Return

Brandon Inniss is either going to win a game for the Buckeyes with a long punt return or is going to lose a game for his team by mishandling a punt.

Am I the only one who thinks he looks clueless back there, not sure whether to catch the ball and run, call for a fair catch, let the ball roll, or pick it up?

Ohio State has more coaching personnel than you can imagine. The assistant coaches have assistant coaches (really). There are program assistants, analysts, quality control staffers, grad assistants, etc. Is there somebody among this stunning

amount of personnel who is an expert on punt returns who can tutor Inniss? He's got the speed and moves to break off a big one. He just needs some help.

I got to thinking and played a hunch, wondering if Ohio State offensive coordinator Brian Hartline had returned punts during his time at OSU. Upon further review, not only was he back there, but he was pretty good at it. He returned 24 punts in his Buckeye career with a 10.5-yard average. As a sophomore in 2007 he averaged 11.5 yards on 20 returns with a 90-yard touchdown against Kent State.

In fact, on the cover of the Oct. 20, 2007, issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, there is a huge cover photo of Hartline, blazing past numerous Kent State players on his way to pay dirt.

"Brian Hartline broke an Ohio State record that had stood for nearly 60 years when he returned a punt 90 yards for a touchdown," I wrote in this space in 2007. "Hartline continued to move out from the shadow cast by running mate Brian Robiskie with his long return as well as three receptions for 47 yards and his team's first score of the afternoon."

Hartline said this of his return:

"It happened so fast. I was wondering where everybody was at. Then I saw Vern (Gholston) just destroying somebody on the field, so I'm just following him. It was a fun play."

Fast-forward to today. I know Hartline is busy with lots of things as OC, but Inniss is one of his boys. How about some tutoring? And if you are wondering, Hartline had 52 catches for 694 yards and six touchdowns in 2007.

Franklin Speaks The Truth

Any regular reader of this column knows that I love seeing things in our historical pieces that are ironic after years of retrospect. Such items usually come from our "From the Pages of BSB" feature. This issue, our bit of irony comes from our Reprint Thursday feature at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com.

For those of you not familiar with this feature, each Thursday we reprint stories from the BSB archives. We usually try to reprint stories from a paper relevant to something or someone in the news today.

After Penn State coach James Franklin was fired on Oct. 12, we ran stories from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin following Penn State's 24-21 win over No. 2 Ohio State on Oct. 22, 2016 – the so-called blocked-kick game. The Lions came back to win the game in the fourth quarter with a blocked punt that set up a field goal and a blocked field-goal attempt that was returned for a 60-yard touchdown. It would prove to be Franklin's only win over the Buckeyes in 11-plus seasons at the helm.

As any college football fan knows by now, Franklin is best known for his inability to win against ranked teams, especially conference rivals Ohio State and Michigan. His win over Urban Meyer and the Buckeyes in 2016 was his first such victory and a highlight of his career.

In 2014 he lost to unranked Michigan and 13th-ranked Ohio State, as well as No. 10 Michigan State. As you may recall, MSU was a conference power in those years, under Mark Dantonio. In 2015 the Lions lost to No. 14 Michigan and top-rated Ohio State, as well as sixth ranked Michigan State.

In 2016, PSU had already fallen to No. 4 Michigan – 49-10 no less – before blocking its way to victory over Ohio State, finally giving Franklin a

big win.

The whole point of this note is to point out what Franklin told his players in the locker room after the game.

"Before you leave this locker room, *nights like this don't happen often* (my italics)," he told the players. "Savor it. Stay in this locker room, turn the music up, and enjoy each other, because there's nothing outside that locker room that is better than what we've got going in this locker room right now."

Franklin was right. Those nights didn't happen very often at all.

The Nittany Lions would go on to defeat No. 6 Wisconsin in the Big Ten Championship Game that season, earning them a trip to the Rose Bowl, where they were defeated by No. 9 USC, 52-49.

Savor it, indeed.

Grumpy Old Men

First off, a reminder that the cost of upgrading your BSB subscription to first-class mail in an envelope through the Michigan game has dropped to just \$20, \$30 to upgrade through the playoffs and the Recruiting Wrap-Up.

Here's a scenario to consider.

The Michigan game is scheduled for Nov. 29 this year. We will be mailing BSB on Tuesday Nov. 25 that week, and Thanksgiving, with no mail service, is two days later. With The Game scheduled for a noon kickoff on Saturday, getting your BSB to you on time, even if you are a first-class subscriber, will be problematic. Come Monday, many of you will be on the horn, complaining that you didn't get your paper in a timely fashion.

Don't say I didn't warn you.

To upgrade, simply give us a call at (614) 486-2202 or (800) 760-2862 to order by credit card. Or you can send your check, money order or credit card information (don't forget your three- or four-digit security code) to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212. Be sure to mention either the "Football Upgrade" or the "Recruiting Upgrade."

Speaking of customers complaining, I have a confession to make.

If you have called in recently to complain about your BSB delivery and the person who answered the phone was cranky, that was me and I apologize. A month and a half of relentless phone calls about delivery, something that I don't have the ability to fix, has gotten to me.

I'm going to share a domestic story with you. After a particularly bad day of phone complaints, I called my significant other.

"I don't know what to do," I told her. "I suggest that they read the paper online, until it finally comes. They won't do it. I suggest they upgrade to first-class though football season. They won't do it. "What am I supposed to say?"

Heidi didn't answer my question, but she had a unique response.

"They are all cranky old men, just like you."

I'm willing to admit the cranky old man shoe fits for me. How about you?

And to prove that I am not cranky *all* the time, you can get your upgrade to first-class through the Michigan game for free by taking advantage of "Frank's Special Offer," as described in the last issue.

Just take advantage of the "Texas Beater-Inflation Beater Special" with its \$20 off any level BSB subscription and I'll upgrade you to first-class mail in an envelope through the 2025 Michigan game for free – now a \$20 value. Just reach out to us at the above address or numbers.

A one-year subscription (regularly \$124.95) is \$104.95, and two years (regularly \$199.95) is just \$179.95. Either will include the first-class upgrade through the Michigan game.

The first-class upgrade is *not* automatic. You *must* mention "Frank's Special Offer."



PRESENTED BY
Dinsmore

THE GREAT EIGHT 50TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION COMMEMORATIVE STATUE SET



Order Yours Today!



REDSMUSEUM.ORG

/GreatEight