

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 45, No. 10

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Nov. 22, 2025

Buckeyes Run For 222 Yards In 48-10 Win Over UCLA

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

The Ohio State football team's win over Purdue offered glimpses of a run game that might have been starting to find its stride. Then, against UCLA, it showed up in full force.

Against the Boilermakers on Nov. 8, there was a lot of promise shown by freshman running backs Bo Jackson and Isaiah West, who ran for a combined 5.9 yards per carry (135 yards on 23 totes), while power back CJ Donaldson Jr. tumbled into the end zone for short scores twice.

Even when the run blocking from the offensive line might not have been at its best, there were multiple occasions when Jackson or West was breaking tackles and pushing forward for an extra yard or more.

But the steps that were taken in that game were surpassed quickly when the Bruins came into Columbus to lose to the Buckeyes 48-10 on Nov. 15.

"The running backs ran hard," head coach Ryan Day noted after the game. "Thirty-three carries for 222 yards. Just about all of those guys averaged over 7 yards per carry. There were a lot of runs in there where we were making guys miss on the first level and the second level, in particular James (Peoples). But it starts with the offensive line."

In the first half alone, Jackson rushed for 75 yards, equaling the total he had in the full game against Purdue, with help from a 32-yard scamper that wasn't called back for a block-in-the-back penalty like his phantom 70-yard touchdown from the week before was.

Then West got involved in the action, with a 38-yard carry of his own when he went up the middle in the second quarter.

And possibly the most impressive play of



SONNY BROCKWAY

A LEG UP — Ohio State re-established the running game in a big way against UCLA, highlighted by sophomore James Peoples hurdling Bruins defensive back Cole Martin (21) on the way to a 19-yard touchdown as part of the 222 rushing yards for the Buckeyes.

the game was from the previously pushed-down-the-depth-chart sophomore James Peoples, who ran outside to the right and made a cornerback miss by bouncing to-

ward the middle. Then, after bouncing back out to the outside, he leaped over Bruin defensive back Cole Martin and ran untouched for a 19-yard score.

"I have to be honest, what was going through my head was just reading the blocks and the guys opened it up for me," Peoples said of his run. "From that moment on, it was kind of just instinct. After I did it, it was kind of like a movie. I was like, 'Oh my gosh, what did I do?' and all my teammates came and congratulated me."

Peoples' thought process was simple when he made the decision to hurdle over the defender.

"When I saw him go low, I went high

and I just cleared him," Peoples said.

In the first half alone, Jackson averaged 9.4 yards per carry, West averaged 14.3, and Peoples had 10.5, with both Jackson and Peoples converting on touchdown runs. Not surprisingly, those averages went down – Jackson finishing at 7.5 yards per carry, West with 7.6 and Peoples with 7.0 – but the 6.7 yards per carry team average was the best number the Buckeye run game put up this season since the Sept. 13 win over Ohio (7.2).

It was the highest average they had in a Power Four contest by 1.6 yards, besting

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From The Message Board

Buckeye Leaves

Ohio State was shorthanded in the 48-10 win over UCLA on Nov. 15 but still had many different players stand out in the big win, improving to 10-0 and 7-0 in the Big Ten. Here are some choices from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff members and readers from the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum for players who were worthy of receiving Buckeye Leaves.

Sam Cipriani, BSB: For his team-leading seven-tackle performance in No. 1 Ohio State's victory over UCLA, I'm giving my Buckeye Leaf to senior linebacker Sonny Styles. The Pickerington, Ohio, native anchored the Buckeye defense throughout the night, serving a vital role manning the middle of the field for Ohio State.

Styles' most impactful moment of the night came on UCLA's final drive of the first half. On second-and-15 with just over a minute to play in the half, the Buckeye captain took down Bruins running back Anthony Woods for a 1-yard loss to force a third-and-16.

Bobby Gorbett, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf is going to Lorenzo Styles Jr., the man who had Ohio State's first kickoff return touchdown in 15 years.

Styles, Ohio State's starting nickel cornerback, made the explosive special teams play in the third quarter when the Buckeyes were leading 34-7. Styles started his return a few yards into the end zone and cut across the field to find a wide-open hole in the Bruins' kick coverage.

UCLA kicker Mateen Bhaghani was no match for Styles' speed, and he was able to cruise into the end zone for Ohio State's first kick-return touchdown since former Ohio State running back Jordan Hall had an 85-yard return score during Ohio State's 37-7 win over Michigan in 2010.

Styles also had a solid performance defensively. The 6-1 cornerback had five total tackles, which was tied for the second most on the team.

Greg Wilson, BSB: I'm giving my Buckeye Leaf to freshman running back Bo Jackson, who has been a major part of getting Ohio State's run

game going in the past few games. He shouldered the load for Ohio State's ground game against UCLA, getting 15 carries in the game.

He also took the role of the injured CJ Donaldson Jr. when the Buckeyes made it to the goal line in the first quarter, and it took just one handoff for Jackson to walk into the end zone for his third touchdown of the season.

He finished the game with 112 yards on the 15 carries (7.5 yards per carry) and the score.

BSB Subscribers

Bob Cody: Buckeye Leaves on offense go to Julian Sayin, Bo Jackson, Isaiah West, James "Leaping" Peoples, Brandon Inniss, Bryson Rodgers and Mylan Graham.

Special teams Buckeye Leaves go to Lorenzo "Teddy Ginn" Styles Jr., Caden "blocked punt" Curry, and Jayden Fielding.

Defensive Buckeye Leaves earned by Kenyatta Jackson Jr., Sonny Styles and Lorenzo Syles Jr.

Terrier Buck: I don't usually do Buckeye Leaves, but one play I enjoyed immensely was when Lincoln Kienholz lowered his head and bowled over the defender at the sideline.

BuckeyeScott: Give a Buckeye Leaf to each of the Styles brothers. Sonny for leading the team in tackles and Lorenzo for doing something a Buckeye has not done in 15 years, taking a kickoff to the house!

Tiffin Buckeye: Bo Jackson and Isaiah West.

PeyoteBuck: How about Rodgers for his first TD? West was amazing, and Bo did the grunt work. Styles for his amazing return. Great performances all.

Luckeeman: Brandon Inniss - six catches, two of which were first downs on a third-down play, and one was a fourth-down catch for a first down!

Ohio State seemed to have the 48-10 win over UCLA in hand early, and head coach Ryan Day still left starters in well into the second half. We asked subscribers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum what they think of how long Day leaves starters in during blowout games and if they would do anything differently.

"Technically, Julian Sayin was pulled before (the fourth quarter), we just had the kickoff-return touchdown. Sayin is in the midst of a Heisman push. Why would you want to take him out super early?"

— Tiffin Buckeye

"This has been a perennial complaint for me; that Day leaves starters and especially QBs in too long. But this year, he seems to rotate other players in sooner than in previous seasons. This is part of the plan, expecting a long season. In the UCLA game, I don't think he replaced Sayin with Lincoln Kienholz any too early. Kienholz might have to start a playoff game and needs in-game reps."

— Terrier Buck

"Screw the Heisman. Worry about winning games. Sayin was kept in too long. A torn ACL will upend your trophy chances if you're not careful. Let Kienholz play."

— PeyoteBuck

"I think Day would have pulled Julian sooner, but with Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate out, the offense was sputtering. He was trying to correct that first."

— R1TBDBITL

"I am sure Ryan Day has given this issue a lot of thought. It appears that many of the second- and third-teamers on both offense and defense get playing time in a lot of these blowouts. Sayin does not run much at all. The Buckeyes have only given up six sacks all year. There are only five teams in the country that have given up six or fewer sacks. So from a risk versus reward standpoint, the risk to this Ohio State freshman QB is low relative to giving him as much game-time experience with those new receivers he will be throwing to next year."

— BuckeyeScott

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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
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No. 10	Nov. 22	No. 22	June
No. 11	Nov. 29	No. 23	July
No. 12	Dec. 6	No. 24	August

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OPINION

OSU Run Game Returns At Right Time

On an evening when we found out Julian Sayin is a still redshirt freshman and not the reincarnation of Bart Starr, Johnny Unitas, Joe Montana, Tom Brady and Clark Kent, we also discovered that maybe the Ohio State football team can survive – at least for one game – without the services of Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate.

Those who have been clamoring all year for the running game to shift out of first gear finally got their wish when the Buckeyes made confetti out of the UCLA defense, piling up 222 yards on the ground during a 48-10 blowout Nov. 15 on an Indian summer night in front of 104,168 fans at Ohio Stadium.

It remains my belief that Ohio State can raise another national championship trophy with a running attack that simply complements its potent passing game. But I'll also admit it was nice to watch the offensive line poke holes in a defense – albeit one that entered the game ranked a lowly 121st nationally against the run – while Sayin was having what for him was an off night.

Since bottoming out in mid-October with just 98 yards at Wisconsin, the Buckeyes have rushed for 164 vs. Penn State, 170 at Purdue and 222 against UCLA, the most against a Big Ten opponent this season and the most vs. any conference opponent since piling up 340 during a 56-14 blowout of Indiana on Nov. 12, 2022.

One of the remarkable aspects of achieving all of those yards was the fact that short-yardage specialist CJ Donaldson Jr. was unavailable after being listed as questionable on the team's availability report. That just afforded more carries for backups Isaiah West and James Peoples while freshman Bo Jackson led the ground attack with 112 yards and a touchdown on 15 carries.

Jackson celebrated his fourth 100-yard effort of the season, the most by an OSU running back since TreVeyon Henderson had four during the 2023 season. No Buckeye has cracked the century mark more than four times in a season since J.K. Dobbins had 10 during the 2019 campaign, the same year he set the program record with 2,003 yards.

No one expects Jackson to approach Dobbins' single-season record, but with 725 yards and perhaps as many as six games remaining in the season, Jackson could conceivably challenge the OSU freshman record set by Dobbins with 1,403 in 2017.

With Jackson settling into the starting spot at running back and Donaldson locked in as the short-yardage back, perhaps the toughest job for Ryan Day and running backs coach Carlos Locklyn is to find ways to keep West and Peoples engaged enough to prevent any transfer portal ideas from entering their heads. After all, while Jackson was the nation's No. 5-ranked prep running back last year, Peoples was ranked No. 4 in the 2024 recruiting class in high school and West was ranked No. 19 last year even though a knee injury wiped out most of his senior season.

West's injury lingered into the beginning of his OSU career. He joined the Buckeyes in the spring but wasn't fully cleared to practice until well into fall camp. Since then, he has doggedly worked his way into the running back rotation, and his 61 yards against the Bruins represented a career-high performance, besting the 60 yards he accumulated just one week before against Purdue.

I have also noticed that Jackson and West are improving in another area – blitz recognition and pass protection. Like most freshmen, they entered the college game having earned their reputations for what they could do carrying the football. As a result, most youngsters

find themselves on the sideline during obvious passing downs or when opposing teams dial up quarterback pressure.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

After executing several key blitz pickups against UCLA – not all, but most – Day and Locklyn should feel more comfortable leaving their talented freshmen in the game in passing situations.

As for Peoples, he deserves credit for his patience for waiting behind Henderson and Quinshon Judkins last year and having to share his carries this season with Jackson and West. But his perseverance is something that endears the 5-10, 206-pound sophomore from San Antonio to Buckeye Nation, and he proved that when he gets a chance, he can be every bit as electrifying as any other player on the team.

I'm referring, of course, to the 19-yard touchdown run late in the second quarter, a play during which Peoples dazzled the Horse-shoe crowd as well as a national television audience by hurdling UCLA safety Cole Martin on his way to the end zone. While Martin went low to attack Peoples' legs, the Ohio State running back launched himself skyward, somehow managing to retain his balance while Martin was left grasping at air.

Overlooked on the play, however, was how Peoples got as far as the 10-yard line to make Martin look so foolish. Lined up as the pistol back to the left of Sayin, Peoples got the hand-off about 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage and made a beeline to his right. While freshman receiver Quincy Porter blocked UCLA cornerback Rodrick Pleasant into the boundary, right tackle Phillip Daniels neutralized linebacker JonJon Vaughns at about the 15-yard line.

After that, Peoples let his instincts take over. He ran toward Daniels before planting his left foot in the ground and zigzagging into the clear. That left only Martin between Peoples and the end zone, and that became a mismatch.

Peoples finished the game with a modest 42 yards on six carries, but he got to the end zone for the first time in his career against a Big Ten opponent and later tacked on an 8-yard touchdown run to give him two scores in a game for the first time. That second score wasn't quite as dramatic as the first, but he still ran through two would-be tacklers on his way to the end zone.

Run Now, Throw Later

Perhaps the potency of the running attack against UCLA will placate the growing number of those who have been critical of that part of the Ohio State offense. I would expect much of the same thing against Rutgers, a team that is only marginally better than the Bruins against the run.

In the last issue of BSB, publisher Frank Moskowitz remained unconvinced that the 170-yard ground effort against Purdue was the sign of a resurgent run game.

"I can't exactly put my finger on why I am still not sold, but I'm not," Frank wrote. "Maybe it has to do with the fact that those numbers were put up against the No. 91 rush defense in the country. Maybe I'm left wondering what would happen if Day and Brian Hartline decided to double down on Chip Kelly's strategy of running the ball up the middle against Michigan on Nov. 29. Is this rushing attack up to that

challenge?"

My hope is that Day has learned his lesson these past four years and doesn't try another absurd experiment in proving his team's toughness.

I couldn't care less if Michigan holds Ohio State to fewer than 50 yards rushing. The past few weeks notwithstanding, the Buckeyes are a passing team, and whatever success they achieve from now until whenever their season ends will be predicated on how well the offensive line protects Sayin, how well the redshirt freshman performs in the white-hot, end-of-the-season spotlight, and the health of his star receivers.

The production of the running game against UCLA papered over an uncharacteristic poor performance by Sayin, although labeling it as poor only underlines how off-the-charts good the QB has been most of the season. Despite the absence of Tate for a second straight game and an obviously hobbled Smith, Sayin still managed to complete 23 of 31 attempts for 184 yards and a touchdown.

For the first time since the early part of the season, however, Sayin didn't appear to be comfortable in the pocket. Whether it was the inexperience of some of his receivers or a protection breakdown here and there, Sayin's normal pinpoint accuracy just wasn't there on several occasions. Even Day noticed his QB wasn't his usual self, giving him the side-eye after a couple of errant throws.

Playing With Numbers

If you had Lorenzo Styles Jr. returning a kickoff 100 yards for a touchdown on your Buckeye Bingo Card, congratulations. Coming into the game, the Buckeyes had returned only three kickoffs all season – each of them by Brandon Inniss – for an average of 19.0 yards per return. Styles, who returned three kickoffs for an average of 26.0 yards per attempt during his two seasons at Notre Dame, last returned a kickoff for a touchdown in 2020 when he was playing high school ball at Pickerington (Ohio) Central.

I'm sure you'll read elsewhere in this issue of BSB that Styles became the first OSU player to return a kickoff for a touchdown since Jordan Hall ran one back 85 yards during a 37-7 win against Michigan in 2010. But Styles also became the first Buckeye with a 100-yard kickoff return since Ted Ginn Jr. did it in 2005 during a 45-31 win against Minnesota.

Bryson Rodgers' 11-yard touchdown reception in the second quarter was not only the first of his career, but Rodgers also became the first OSU player wearing jersey No. 13 to cross the goal line since Rashod Berry gathered in a 1-yard TD pass from Dwayne Haskins during a 28-23 win against Washington in the 2019 Rose Bowl. That was the 50th and final touchdown pass for Haskins during the 2018 season, a total that still represents program and conference single-season records.

As unbelievable as it sounds, Ohio State had never before in its history beaten a team by a 48-10 final score. The Buckeyes hadn't hit the 48-point mark since the wild 48-45 win against Utah in the 2021 Rose Bowl.

Want to hear something even more unbelievable? Big Ten officials have not called offensive holding against an Ohio State opponent in 19 consecutive conference games. The last time a Big Ten opponent was flagged for holding during a conference game came during a 35-16 win against Rutgers on Nov. 4, 2023, when Scarlet Knights offensive lineman Curtis Dunlap Jr. grabbed Ohio State defensive end Tyleik Williams. That is a span of 1,091 snaps ... and counting.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Four Contributors Dealing With Injuries

For the second straight week, Ohio State was without both star wideout Carnell Tate and offensive lineman Josh Padilla.

The Buckeyes were also without sophomore wide receiver Jeremiah Smith for the second half of the 48-10 win over UCLA on Nov. 15 after he was listed as questionable pregame. He did play to begin the contest and had four catches for 40 yards, but he came out before halftime and didn't play when the teams re-emerged from their locker rooms.

Smith was seen limping into the tunnel after the game, but head coach Ryan Day said that he doesn't expect either his or Tate's injuries to be long-term issues.

Padilla suffered an injury in the second half against Penn State on Nov. 1 and has not played for the last two games, while Tate was held out of the win over Purdue on Nov. 8, also missing two straight contests now.

Running back CJ Donaldson Jr. entered the UCLA game as questionable and ultimately did not see any in-game action, with Bo Jackson, Isaiah West and James Peoples picking up the slack in the backfield.

OSU-Rutgers Set For Noon Kickoff

Following Ohio State's win over UCLA, the Buckeyes will return to Ohio Stadium during the day for its faceoff against Rutgers on Nov. 22. The kickoff time for the clash between the Buckeyes and Scarlet Knights is set for noon and the game will be broadcast on FOX.

Rutgers has never beaten Ohio State, dropping all 10 meetings in the series. The two teams haven't faced each other since Nov. 4, 2023, a 35-16 Buckeye win in Piscataway, N.J., which remains the closest game between the Buckeyes and Scarlet Knights. That matchup is the only time Rutgers has finished within 20 points of Ohio State.

Ohio State has beaten Rutgers by 35-plus points eight times, by 40 or more on four occasions, and by more than 50 twice.

In its matchup against the Scarlet Knights, Ohio State will go against Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano, who was the Buckeyes' associate head coach and defensive coordinator from 2016-18.

Day Gives Update On Right Guard Battle

Following an injury-riddled week in which several Ohio State linemen missed

2025 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Aug. 30	TEXAS	W, 14-7	FOX	7-3, 35-10 loss to Georgia
Sept. 6	GRAMBLING	W, 70-0	BTN	7-4, 27-16 loss to Alcorn State
Sept. 13	OHIO	W, 37-9	Peacock	6-4, 17-13 loss to Western Mich.
Sept. 27	at Washington	W, 24-6	CBS	7-3, 49-13 win over Purdue
Oct. 4	MINNESOTA	W, 42-3	NBC	6-4, 42-13 loss to Oregon
Oct. 11	at Illinois	W 34-16	FOX	7-3, 24-6 win over Maryland
Oct. 18	at Wisconsin	W, 34-0	CBS	2-7, 31-7 loss to Indiana
Nov. 1	PENN STATE	W, 38-14	FOX	4-6, 28-10 win over Michigan State
Nov. 8	at Purdue	W, 34-10	BTN	2-9, 49-13 loss to Washington
Nov. 15	UCLA	W, 48-10	NBC	3-6, 48-10 loss to Ohio State
Nov. 22	RUTGERS	Noon	FOX	5-5, idle
Nov. 29	at Michigan	Noon	FOX	8-2, 24-22 win over Northwestern

the Buckeyes' 34-10 win over Purdue, Day clarified the team's plan at right guard, a spot that has been a troubling area throughout the season.

With those inconsistencies, Day said on Nov. 11 that Tegra Tshabola and Padilla would continue to share reps at right guard, with split reps allowing the pair to stay fresh. He stated that the outlook of the position is subject to change depending on upcoming performances.

"Where we stand right now, we're going to kind of split the duty up there (between Tshabola and Padilla)," Day said. "But who knows, that might change later today. Josh has to get healthy. We'll see how even Ethan (Onianwa) does today. But that's kind of where we feel like we are right now. And we feel like splitting the reps can help them and all those guys become more efficient. But we're going to keep evaluating, keep pushing on it and see where we go."

Tshabola has started in all 10 of Ohio State's contests this season and 25 total games throughout his career as a Buckeye, but Padilla has slowly pushed the fellow junior for snaps of late, earning 19, 14 and 26 snaps against Minnesota, Illinois and Wisconsin, respectively, before suffering an injury late against Penn State.

With Padilla sidelined for the Buckeyes' win over Purdue, Tshabola played in 65 snaps, while Gabe VanSickle earned 13 snaps in rotation, primarily at right guard.

According to Pro Football Focus' weekly grades, Tshabola was the Buckeyes' lowest-graded starting offensive lineman against Purdue with a rating of 62.1 and a 52.3 grade in pass blocking and 62.8 in run blocking. Since Padilla saw an uptick in playing time against Minnesota, the Huber Heights, Ohio, native bested Tshabola's PFF grades in four straight weeks prior to his injury.

Against UCLA, Padilla was ruled out again and Tshabola got the start. However, VanSickle earned a good amount of playing time throughout the win as soon as the second quarter.

Four Bucks Semifinalists For National Honors

Ohio State had four of its players recognized as awards lists are being narrowed down.

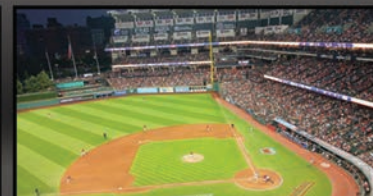
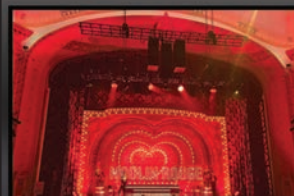
Redshirt-freshman quarterback Julian Sayin and Smith were named semifinalists for the Maxwell Award, which is given to the best player in the country in college football each year.

The Buckeyes were also recognized on the other side of the ball, with safety Caleb Downs and linebacker Arvell Reese named semifinalists for the Chuck Bednarik Award, given to the best defender in college football each season.

It's no surprise to see Sayin or Smith as one of 13 semifinalists for the Maxwell Award since both are still in the conver-

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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. For the UCLA game, Sam Cipriani saw it 45-13, Bobby Gorbett 41-6, and Greg Wilson 42-6.

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

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sation for the Heisman Trophy. Sayin is currently the second favorite to win the award behind Indiana signal caller Fernando Mendoza.

He has completed 226 of 282 passes (80.1 percent) for 2,675 yards, 25 touchdowns and just four interceptions, his first pick against a Power Four team coming in the win over Purdue. That game was his sixth time this season throwing for over 300 yards and his fifth time completing over 80 percent of his passes.

Smith may have taken a bit of a back seat to Sayin in the Heisman conversation, but the sophomore receiver is still putting up big numbers. He has 69 catches for 902 yards and 10 touchdowns, already climbing up the all-time leaderboards in

Ohio State history in just his second season.

Reese leads the team in tackles with 58 stops, 10 for loss and 6½ sacks. He has also broken up two passes and hurried the quarterback twice. Downs is third on the team with 46 tackles and has four for loss, while adding two interceptions.

Finalists for the Maxwell Award will be revealed on Nov. 25, and the winner will be announced on Dec. 11 at the College Football Award Show on ESPN. Three finalists for the Chuck Bednarik Award will be revealed on Nov. 27, and the winner will be announced the same day as the Maxwell Award winner.

Downs, Sayin and Smith were all also included as semifinalists for the Walter

Camp Player of the Year Award on Nov. 12.

Ohio State is the only program with three players on the list, which consists of 20 from around the country.

Sayin was also named a semifinalist for the Davey O'Brien Quarterback of the Year Award.

McShay Forecasts Reese As No. 1 Pick In Draft

As Ohio State's regular season is starting to wind down, NFL mock draft season is only beginning. With the Buckeyes being undefeated and ranked the No. 1 team in the country, it should come as no surprise that NFL draft experts such as Todd McShay of The Ringer are predicting several Buckeyes will be selected in the first

round of the 2026 NFL draft.

As part of an episode of "The McShay Show," posted on Nov. 13, McShay had Reese being selected by the Tennessee Titans with the No. 1 overall pick in the draft. McShay also compared Reese to Green Bay Packers defensive end and four-time Pro Bowler Micah Parsons.

"I'm getting the sense by the time April rolls around, there could be people throughout the NFL, and most importantly in that Tennessee organization, that look at Arvell Reese as the next Micah Parsons," McShay said. "They're not built identically the same, they don't have the same exact background in terms of how much (time they spent) at edge, but Micah was an off-ball linebacker, who moved to edge and became one of the best to do it in a long time and remains that way with the Green Bay Packers after being traded from Dallas."

Reese is only in his first year as a starter at Ohio State, but he could certainly depart from the program early after this season to head to the NFL if he continues to excel on the field.

Orlovsky Says OSU Is Least-Tested No. 1 Team

Although the College Football Playoff and Associated Press have Ohio State ranked No. 1 after its undefeated start, not everyone has bought into the Buckeyes. During an episode of ESPN's "Get Up" on Nov. 13, ESPN analyst and former NFL quarterback Dan Orlovsky was critical of the Buckeyes' schedule.

"They're the least tested No. 1 team in the history of college football," Orlovsky said. "They've played nobody. Week 1 (they played) Texas. Ever since then, they haven't played anybody. I don't know that they've played a team that is ranked right now since Texas. We have no idea how good Ohio State is down by four in the fourth quarter."

According to ESPN, Ohio State's schedule ranked as the 42nd-hardest in

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OHIO STATE

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the country through nine games. Texas is the only team Ohio State has defeated ranked in the College Football Playoff committee's most recent top-25 rankings. However, the Buckeyes have defeated every Big Ten opponent they've faced by at least 18 points.

Day Says Patricia Is Defense's Head Coach

On "The Ryan Day Show" on Nov. 13, Day addressed the defensive shifts this

season under new coordinator Matt Patricia, whose impact has helped shape the Buckeyes into one of the nation's top units.

When co-hosts Paul Keels and Jim Lachey asked Day how much he's been involved with Ohio State's defense, the Buckeye head coach said he has had little input other than touching base with Patricia.

"Not much. Not much," Day said. "Matt Patricia and I talk here and there just philosophically about what we're trying to get done, but he's doing a great job."

Day continued, stating that Patricia is like the "head coach of the defense," and with a strong coaching staff behind him, he has helped drive an elite Ohio State unit.

"He's really the head coach of the defense, organizes it all, and he's got a great staff with him," Day said. "Tim Walton, James Laurinaitis, Larry Johnson and Matt Guerrieri help Patricia keep the defense organized."

Patricia joined Ohio State on Feb. 20, a month following the Buckeyes' national championship win under defensive coordinator

Jim Knowles, who departed for Penn State just six days after claiming the national title.

Although Knowles helped lead Ohio State to its first national championship in a decade last year, it wasn't always perfect for the Silver Bullets. In a 32-31 loss to Oregon last year, Ohio State gave up 496 yards, and that performance led Day to spend more time with the unit than he had previously that season.

So far this season, Day hasn't had any reason to give the defense any extra attention. Through 10 games, the Buckeyes were allowing just 7.5 points per game – the best mark in the FBS by 4.1 points, ahead of No. 2 Indiana. Ohio State's defense is also allowing 212.6 yards per game, which also ranks first nationally.

Bucks Still No. 1 In AP, CFP Polls

Ohio State was ranked No. 1 in the College Football Playoff committee's second release of its top-25 rankings three days after defeating Purdue on Nov. 11.

The Buckeyes, who were also ranked

No. 1 in the CFP rankings the first week they were released this season, were followed by No. 2 Indiana, No. 3 Texas A&M and No. 4 Alabama. Each team ranked inside the top four of the committee's rankings receives a first-round bye in the playoffs.

The rest of the top 12 included No. 5 Georgia, No. 6 Texas Tech, No. 7 Ole Miss, No. 8 Oregon, No. 9 Notre Dame, No. 10 Texas, No. 11 Oklahoma and No. 12 BYU.

However, because the top five conference champions receive automatic bids into the playoffs, Oklahoma and BYU would not be included in the playoffs if the season ended with these rankings.

No. 15 Miami of the ACC and No. 24 USF of the American Conference were on track to be included in the playoffs as the No. 11 and No. 12 seeds, respectively. No. 17 USC, No. 18 Michigan and No. 21 Iowa were the only other Big Ten teams included in the rankings.

Then, in the AP top-25 released one day after Ohio State's victory over UCLA, the Buckeyes remained at No. 1 for the 12th straight week.

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1985

The wind, whipping in off Lake Michigan, was cold. The rain never stopped. The thunder was loud. The lightning was bold.

But Jim Karsatos did not let the elements bother him when Ohio State went up against Northwestern on Nov. 9. Karsatos simply went about his business in his usual methodical way, putting his name in the OSU record book in the process.

The junior out of Sunny Hills High School in Fullerton, Calif., threw for 275 yards and three touchdowns, and the Buckeyes, ranked third or fourth depending on which national poll you recognized, played pitch and catch with the Wildcats.

A 35-17 win was all in a day's work for Karsatos. The three TD tosses gave Karsatos 17 for the season, tying a single-season OSU record set by Art Schlichter in 1981.

35 Years Ago — 1990

When Ohio State quarterback Greg Frey wanted to complete any old pass, he had a variety of numbers he could call in the huddle. But when Frey absolutely, positively had to have a touchdown in the clutch, he dialed "O" for Olive.

Frey suffered through one of his most frustrating days in three seasons as OSU quarterback but nevertheless knew who to go to when the game was on the line.

Bobby Olive latched onto the 3-yard, game-winning touchdown grab with just one tick left on the Kinnick Stadium scoreboard clock, giving the Buckeyes a heart-throbbing 27-26 victory over sixth-ranked and conference-leading Iowa.

Olive, who won Big Bear Buckeye of the Week honors for grabbing six receptions for 99 yards against Iowa, had made a career out of making clutch catches for the Buckeyes.

30 Years Ago — 1995

After stirring pregame ceremonies celebrating the final home game for OSU's seniors – including offensive stars Eddie George and Bobby Hoying – the Buckeyes went out against Indiana with the idea of knocking the Hoosiers out quickly.

Even though it took the better part of three quarters to do it, the second-ranked Buckeyes were able to take care of business.

More than anything, Ohio State simply outlasted Indiana in taking a 42-3 win on Nov. 18 at Ohio Stadium. The Buckeyes outscored the Hoosiers 14-0 in the fourth quarter to widen the margin of victory.

The Buckeyes welcomed back star flanker Terry Glenn, who had missed the Illinois game the week before after suffering a shoulder injury at Minnesota on Nov. 4. All he did was catch five passes for 103 yards and a pair of touchdowns from Hoying before leaving the game with OSU up 21-3 at halftime.

25 Years Ago — 2000

With Ohio State taking a second-half lead over Michigan State, OSU coach John Cooper went directly to his own Buckeye bible for advice.

Inside it, he found one of his favorite rules for winning football games.

"One of our 10 commandments is, 'Win the surest way,' and today the surest way was to run it, keep it away from them and take care of the ball in key situations," said Cooper, moments after

his Buckeyes dispatched the visiting Spartans 27-13 on Nov. 4 at Ohio Stadium.

Ohio State rallied from an early 13-3 deficit to take a 20-13 lead early in the second half. With the OSU defense controlling the Spartans, Cooper decided to keep things simple and run the football. In the second half, the Buckeyes attempted 34 rushes in their 36 plays.

"We got very, very conservative," Cooper admitted. "Again, blame me for that. Don't blame (offensive coordinator Chuck) Stobart or (quarterback) Steve Bellisari or anybody else. Blame the head coach."

20 Years Ago — 2005

When oddsmakers installed Ohio State as a 35-point favorite over Illinois in the days leading up to the two teams' Nov. 5 matchup, sports bettors must have thought they were looking at some easy money.

Yes, the Buckeyes had scored 45 and 41 points, respectively, in their last two outings, but they hadn't put up 40 or more in three consecutive games for a decade, and before the two most recent outbursts, the team hadn't even scored 38 points in regulation since Oct. 12, 2002.

But this OSU team was beginning to distinguish itself from prior Jim Tressel-coached outfits. The defense continued to play its physical, pressuring brand of football, while the offense was finally flashing its big-play capability with some consistency, just as many had expected it to do prior to the season.

Both facets were certainly on display against the Illini, who managed a return of a botched extra-point attempt in a 40-2 loss to the Buckeyes.

"There was a time where never in my life would I bet the spread on Ohio State," said senior linebacker Bobby Carpenter – speaking theoretically, of course. "Now, I can't say the same thing because they're going out and putting some points up."

15 Years Ago — 2010

An unranked Penn State squad led by a former walk-on quarterback trotted into its locker room with a 14-3 lead halfway through what would prove to be a 38-14 OSU victory over the Nittany Lions.

The seventh-largest crowd in Ohio Stadium history let its feelings be heard, showering the Buckeyes with boos as they retreated up the tunnel into the southeast corner of the stadium.

Given the first-half performance, senior wide receiver Dane Sanzenbacher said he sided with the angry mob.

"We're running off the field and I'm thinking, 'I want to boo us right now,'" he said.

But as the OSU players retreated to the perceived safety of their locker room, they had no idea what type of message was about to be delivered from an unlikely source: their head coach.

"He got real fired up," junior quarterback Terrelle Pryor said. "I haven't seen him like that before. We were getting embarrassed on our home field. When he turned it up, he caught our attention, and we started turning it up. Eventually, we got the defense rolling, and it got the offense rolling."

10 Years Ago — 2015

As it stood, it appeared the Ohio State Buckeyes would go

only as far as Ezekiel Elliott could take them.

Luckily for the reigning national champions, their workhorse running back was more than willing to shoulder the load on the road to another playoff appearance. In a 28-3 win against Illinois on Nov. 14, Elliott rushed 27 times for 181 yards and two touchdowns, allowing him to pass Tim Spencer for third on the OSU career rushing list.

"It's a blessing to be compared to the great running backs at Ohio State," Elliott said. "I've just got to give thanks to the O-line. We've basically had the same O-line since I started here, and they make it easy for me week in and week out. I'm just blessed to play behind those guys."

On a more micro level, it was his 15th consecutive 100-yard game, all of which ended in Ohio State wins. Elliott didn't have any of the huge runs that had come to define him, but he battered the Illini until they couldn't take it anymore.

Five Years Ago — 2020

Just 15 minutes before he was set to address the team during a weekly meeting on Nov. 11, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day found out the Buckeyes would not be playing Maryland the following weekend due to a coronavirus outbreak within the Terrapins' program.

"I'm just surprised that it happened so quickly," Day said during a teleconference on Nov. 12. "We were getting ready for practice on Wednesday, and it's like, 'We're not playing. How did that just happen?' I guess that's on me. I shouldn't be surprised about anything that happens now."

Three days of preparation for a trip to Maryland went out the window in an instant, so Ohio State quickly shifted focus to the Nov. 21 game against undefeated Indiana.

"Literally, at that moment, I just told everybody, 'We're done with Maryland,'" Day said. "The other coaches were kind of looking at me like, 'OK, so what are we doing, Coach?'"

"We just went out there, had a good practice working on fundamentals, base plays against base defenses. All of our attention went to Indiana."

One Year Ago — 2024

In his first and perhaps only collegiate football game in his hometown of Chicago, sophomore wide receiver Carnell Tate lived up to the promise he showed as a highly touted high schooler out of Marist High School. In Ohio State's 31-7 win over Northwestern on Nov. 16 at Wrigley Field, Tate finished the game with four catches, 52 receiving yards and a career-high two touchdowns.

Any homecoming means a lot to a player in college football, but Tate's was especially meaningful. On July 16, 2023 – months before the start of Tate's freshman season with the Buckeyes – Tate's mother was tragically killed in a drive-by shooting in Chicago's Garfield Park neighborhood.

"The way that he's handled himself has been an example to everybody," Day said. "We care a lot about him, and to see him hit two touchdown passes in his hometown in front of a big – I think he had over 25 people here watching him – I know it means a lot to him, but it also means a lot to us. We're really happy for him today."

Three Bucks Named Players Of The Game

For their standout efforts in Ohio State's victory over Purdue, the Buckeyes honored Smith, defensive tackle Kayden McDonald and linebacker Payton Pierce as their players of the game.

Smith was the Buckeyes' offensive player of the game. Ohio State's star receiver set a career high in catches with Tate sidelined against the Boilermakers. Smith finished with 10 receptions, which he took for 137 yards and one touchdown.

Smith's biggest moment came midway through the second quarter, when Sayin threaded a pass down the middle and dropped it perfectly into the second-year wideout's hands, just beyond two Purdue defenders, for a 35-yard touchdown that extended Ohio State's lead to 14-3.

McDonald, who earned defensive player of the game honors, was yet again a force to be reckoned with in Ohio State's win over Purdue. The Suwanee, Ga., native racked up four solo tackles, including a critical tackle for loss on a third-and-2 in the third quarter.

Pierce was named Ohio State's special teams player of the game but was effective on both defense and special teams. The sophomore linebacker led the Buckeyes with seven total tackles, including five solo tackles.

Pierce had two tackles as a member of the Ohio State kickoff unit, both coming in the second quarter, while also taking down

Purdue offensive players five times on the Boilermakers' final drive of the game.

Sayin, Smith, McDonald Top PFF Grades

It was the usual cast of characters who were Ohio State's highest-graded players in the win over Purdue. For their respective performances against the Boilermakers, Sayin, McDonald and Smith were all highly graded by Pro Football Focus.

With an 89.2 grade, Sayin was the highest-graded player on the team for the fifth straight week. The Heisman Trophy candidate threw for 303 yards, a touchdown and an interception, while completing 27 of 33 passes.

McDonald followed closely behind with an 88.3 grade. He was the highest-graded defensive tackle in the country in Week 11, according to PFF. Smith received an 87.2 grade after his career high in receptions.

Jackson also had a quality performance, according to PFF. The true freshman ran for 75 yards on 14 carries and received an 80.1 grade, making him the highest-graded freshman running back in the country in Week 12.

Senior linebacker Sonny Styles also graded out well. Styles received an 81.6 grade after logging five total tackles and a pass deflection in the win.

Senior defensive lineman Beau Atkinson (34.8 grade, nine snaps), freshman linebacker TJ Alford (44.2, five) and freshman tight end Nate Roberts (44.9, 18)

were Ohio State's lowest-graded players against Purdue.

Henderson Goes For Five TDs In Two Games

After a rocky start to his rookie season, former Ohio State running back TreVeyon Henderson is finding his stride with the

New England Patriots. The former Buckeye has run for a combined 209 yards and four touchdowns in his two-game breakout, adding a receiving touchdown as well.

Henderson, who played for Ohio State from 2021-24, didn't make a tremendous impact early on for New England.

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The team, led by former Ohio State defensive end Mike Vrabel, relied more on veteran running back Rhamondre Stevenson than Henderson through the first eight weeks of the season. But after Stevenson was sidelined with a toe injury before the Patriots' 24-23 win over the Falcons on Nov. 2, Henderson has seized his opportunity.

On Nov. 9, Henderson helped lead the Patriots to a 28-23 win over the Tampa Bay Buccaneers when he rushed for 147 yards and two touchdowns on 14 carries, before helping lift the Patriots to a 27-14 win over the New York Jets five days later when he went for 62 yards, two rushing touchdowns and a receiving score.

Henderson's most memorable play came early in the second quarter on a first-and-goal play from the 7-yard line. On the play, Henderson appeared to be slowed up a few yards short of the goal line, but he kept his legs moving and was pushed across the goal line by his offensive line.

In an interview on SportsCenter with Scott Van Pelt after the game, Henderson relived his memorable play.

"I really give the credit to the guys up front," Henderson said. "They make our jobs easier. They're the ones who put in the dirty work. At one moment I stopped, I felt like I stopped and I'm coming up short, and then the next thing you know those

guys are hustling downfield and pushing me into the end zone, so I give credit to those guys."

Jets Pay Tribute To Mangold

The New York Jets honored lineman Nick Mangold, who died on Oct. 25, in several ways during their home game against the Cleveland Browns on Nov. 9.

New York first honored the former Ohio State and Jets center with various flags and banners scattered around the seats and draped along the edges of the field.

The Jets also wore shirts pregame with a sketch of Mangold's face on the front and the words "A True Jet" with his No. 74 on the back. New York also wore the decals of Mangold's face on the back of its helmets. The Jets gave T-shirts with the same Mangold logo to fans pregame as well.

Finally, New York honored Mangold with a moment of silence and a tribute video before former Jets offensive lineman

D'Brickashaw Ferguson gave a speech in memory of his teammate and friend.

"It doesn't even feel real," Ferguson said. "I'm sorry we have to do this in this way, but I'm also happy that we get a chance to honor who he is and the legacy that he leaves."

Multiple other players, including former Ohio State tight end Jeremy Ruckert, who wore Mangold's Buckeye jersey, paid tribute to the lineman as well.

Mangold spent four years at Ohio State from 2002-05 before he was selected as the 29th pick in the first round of the 2005 NFL draft by the Jets, where he spent his entire 11-year professional career. Mangold won the 2002 national title with Ohio State and was a first-team All-American with the Buckeyes in 2005. He was a seven-time Pro Bowler, two-time first-team All-Pro and one-time second-team All-Pro with the Jets.

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Buckeyes In A Rush To Leave Bruins In Ruins

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The scrutinized running game had a chance to shine under the lights. Bo Jackson and James Peoples did their part, and Ohio State actually had a kickoff return for a touchdown.

Jackson ran for 112 yards and a touchdown, and Peoples ran for two scores when No. 1 Ohio State steamrolled UCLA 48-10 before 104,168 fans in Ohio Stadium on a pleasant 62-degree Nov. 15 night.

The Buckeyes (10-0, 7-0) dominated the undermanned Bruins for a 27-0 halftime lead on a touchdown run of 1 yard by Jackson, an 11-yard catch for Bryson Rodgers, a wow-moment 19-yarder from Peoples, and Jayden Fielding field goals of 41 and 33 yards.

It was 34-7 before Lorenzo Styles Jr. returned a kickoff 100 yards to make it 41-7 for the first such play for the Buckeyes in 15 years.

UCLA dual-threat quarterback Nico Iamaleava did not play due to a concussion.

Redshirt sophomore Luke Duncan made his first career start for the Bruins and was 16 of 23 for 154 yards and a TD.

While Ohio State receiver Carnell Tate missed a second straight game with an undisclosed injury, Jeremiah Smith, listed as questionable before the game, made four catches for 40 yards playing only the first half.

U-G-L-Y

UCLA gained 2 yards on the opening series and punted 44 yards to the OSU 29.

It took five Jackson runs, three Julian Sayin completions and one spectacular Smith catch to go the 71 yards in 3:54 for a 7-0 lead at 8:47 of the first quarter.

Max Klare opened the drive with a 7-yard catch. Jackson ran for 7, and Rodgers' reception went for 16 to the UCLA 41 before Smith's twisting one-handed grab along the left sideline for 18 yards to the 23.

Jackson then went for 4, 7 and 11 before running up the gut from the 1.

The Bruins then had to punt after their initial first down. They had a third-and-4 from their 42 but were penalized for delay of game and a false start. Needing 14 yards, Anthony Woods ran for 11.

The Buckeyes began their second series from their 18. Sayin was 7 for 7 for 50 yards, but the drive stalled at the UCLA 22, resulting in a 41-yard field goal for Fielding and a 10-0 score with four seconds left in the quarter.

Brandon Inniss, on the third play, had a catch for 8, and Smith followed with a 7-yarder to the OSU 39. Quincy Porter hauled in a 14-yarder along the way, and Isaiah West pulled in a 12-yard pass to the Bruin 29. On third down, Sayin was hurried, and Klare made an 8-yard catch to the 22. Sayin was hit while releasing the throw and injured his left ankle, but he stayed in the game.

For the quarter, he was 10 for 10 for 91 yards, and the Buckeyes led in total yards 131-31.

After another UCLA punt, OSU started at the 18 again.



SONNY BROCKWAY

WHAT A GRAB — Jeremiah Smith needed only one hand to pull in a Julian Sayin pass for 18 yards in the first quarter of the 48-10 pounding of UCLA. Playing only the first half, he made four catches for 40 yards.

The Buckeyes needed two fourth-down conversions on the 12-play drive, the last an 11-yard catch by Rodgers to make it 17-0 with 4:41 left in the half. The 82-yard drive consumed 6:51.

Jackson rushed for 13 on two carries, and Mylan Graham made a catch for 9. Jackson ripped off a 32-yard run to the UCLA 28 before Sayin went back to Graham, but it ended up as his first incompleteness after going 11 for 11 for 100 yards.

Later, the Buckeyes faced fourth-and-5 from the 23 when an Inniss catch of 7 gave OSU new life. But after illegal formation and holding penalties, a Smith catch of 15 under tight coverage along the right side made it fourth-and-5 from the 11.

After an Ohio State timeout, Sayin rolled right to buy time. He waited and waited before spotting Rodgers at the goal line.

UCLA later had a third-and-1 from its 34 when Kenyatta Jackson Jr. burst through the line and swallowed Jaivian Thomas for a 2-yard loss.

UCLA's fourth punt went out of bounds at the 19. On the second play, West took off for a 38-yard gain to the UCLA 43 with two minutes left.

Coming out of the timeout, Inniss caught a 2-yarder, but Sayin missed Klare open by 15 yards downfield. Sayin went back to

Klare for 7, and on third-and-1 from the 34, UCLA was called for pass interference at the 19.

That's when the highlight happened. Peoples broke to his right and was headed down the sideline when he saw defensive back Cole Martin approaching him at the 10. Peoples hurdled him, kept his balance and scored to make it 24-0 with 1:19 left.

The 81-yard drive took 1:53 and five plays.

Just when it seemed it couldn't get worse for UCLA, it did. Punting from the 22 with 16 seconds left, Will Karoll shanked it straight into Buckeye defensive end Caden Curry. It was recovered by Karoll, and the Buckeyes got the ball at the 14 with 10 seconds left.

Sayin threw incomplete to Inniss with six seconds to go, and Fielding booted a 33-yard field goal with one second left to make it 27-0.

The Buckeyes had 294 yards (147 each passing and rushing) while UCLA totaled 50 (21 passing, 29 rushing), and the first downs were 16-2 in favor of Ohio State.

Shining Moment

The Buckeyes got off to an inauspicious start to the second half. Sayin had two incompleteness and was sacked for 4 yards on

third down. Before the punt, OSU was guilty of a false start before Joe McGuire's 51-yard punt was returned to the UCLA 37.

The Bruins went for it on fourth-and-1 from the 46, but Curry stopped Woods for a 1-yard loss.

OSU then turned it over on downs on Sayin's incompleteness to Klare when the Buckeyes needed 4 yards from the UCLA 39. Since his hot start, Sayin was 9 of 15 for 55 yards.

On OSU's next possession, West scored from the 1. It took 13 plays and 6:16 to go 69 yards.

Graham had a 21-yard catch to the UCLA 48, and Jackson had runs of 9 and 18, the latter putting the ball on the 1. After West was stopped the first time, he cut outside and easily scored to make it 34-0 with 2:27 left in the third quarter.

The shutout was broken when UCLA went 75 yards in five plays and 2:10.

Duncan's 51-yard pass to Rico Flores to the 19 with 1:35 left in the third quarter was the first time UCLA crossed midfield.

Three plays later, Duncan connected with Kwazi Gilmer for an 18-yard touchdown to make it 34-7.

Ohio State immediately responded with Styles' electric run to make it 41-7 with three seconds left in the quarter. The last kickoff return for a score was Jordan Hall against Michigan in 2010. It was also the Buckeyes' first of 100 yards since Ted Ginn's in 2005 vs. Minnesota.

"We kind of kicked it in the corner," said UCLA interim coach Tim Skipper. "They returned it back to the field, and our guys got pinned over there in the corner. And it was just free racing. I think it was a no-DNA touchdown. I don't think anybody touched him. So we just had to get it corrected on the sideline. We have to recognize the blocks and counter. We didn't do a good job of that, and it was 88 out the gate."

The Bruins made it 41-10 on a 32-yard field goal by Mateen Bhaghani with 8:49 to play.

Lincoln Kienholz replaced Sayin on the next Buckeye drive, and they went 75 yards on 11 plays and took 6:55 off the clock to go up 48-10 on an 8-yard run by Peoples with 1:54 to play. West ran for 13, Graham caught a 10-yard pass and Nate Roberts had receptions of 9 and 15 yards to the UCLA 20. From there, Peoples ran for 6, 6 and the final 8.

With Iamaleava's brother, Madden, at QB, the Bruins ran four plays for 21 yards to the UCLA 46 to end the game.

Notes

Sayin was 23 of 31 for 184 yards. ... Inniss made six catches for 30 yards. Klare had five catches for 26 and Graham's three went for 40 yards. ... West's 61 yards and TD came on eight carries. Peoples gained 42 yards on six runs. UCLA got 95 of its 222 yards (154 passing, 68 rushing) in the third quarter. ... The Buckeyes totaled 440 yards (218 passing, 222 rushing) and led in first downs 25-8. ... Sonny Styles led the Buckeyes with seven tackles (two solo).

OSU Run Game Starting To Hit Its Stride

Continued From Page 1

the 5.1 mark in the Nov. 1 win over Penn State.

The run by Jackson that put the Buckeyes up 7-0 early in the game was one that usually would have gone to Donaldson, with the ball on the 1-yard line. But the power from the veteran back wasn't needed, with Jackson bursting through the left side to put OSU on top with his third score of the season.

Day was impressed with how all of the running backs played. In the win, there were multiple times when the ball carriers had a situation with a free tackler coming at them, and they either fought through the tackle or made the defender miss, which might not have been the case in previous games.

While Day wishes that the blocking could have been a little better on some plays, he also acknowledged the reality that that isn't always going to be the case, and at some point, the running backs will have to be responsible for getting extra yards.

"On the touchdown run by Bo, I think there was a free hat in the hole, but that's the running game. Sometimes you have to be your own blocker, run guys over and make them miss. That's how it works. It was good."

With the young backs coming into their own over the course of the season, Peoples had been pushed down the depth chart, but he said before the win over UCLA that he wasn't letting that get to him and was happy to see the team playing well regardless of who was getting the carries.

"It's definitely been an adjustment," Peoples said on Nov. 12. "But it's good to see the team is flourishing, where the offense is getting going. We're getting some pace going into it as well. I'm just keeping my mind on the main goal – the team winning, team-oriented goals."

But with Donaldson listed as questionable on the availability report before the game and not getting any carries in the con-

test, Peoples got another chance to show what he can do against Big Ten competition.

He took advantage of that chance, mostly later on in the blowout win after Lincoln Kienholz had come into the game to make a few handoffs.

The sophomore back added to his total in the fourth quarter with 21 more yards on four carries and found his way into the end zone for a second time. It was the first multi-touchdown game of his career and the first time he had scored since Sept. 7, 2024, when the Buckeyes beat Western Michigan 56-0.

Peoples also picked up yardage late in the win over Purdue and against Penn State, and he feels like he has turned a corner with his game.

"I feel like it's been kind of settling in and also the experience as well, but also just, I think a switch had to flip, and I think I found that," Peoples said.

The running back said that this game is one that felt good to have after the way this season has gone for him, beginning the year as the presumed No. 1 back and falling all the way to No. 4 on the depth chart.

"A game like this means everything. Even from the start of the season, with all the ups and downs that come with football, I'm growing in my faith, I'm growing as a person, as a player, and each day I'm coming to work," Peoples said. "It hasn't been going the way I intended it to go, but that's life, and at the end of the day, you just have to keep on going."

It might not have been the best Big Ten competition. UCLA came into the game with the 121st overall rushing defense in the country, giving up 191.1 yards per game on the ground.

The Buckeyes did make that average go up slightly, with 222 in the game. One hundred twelve of those were Jackson's, who shouldered much of the load for Ohio State with 15 carries, compared to eight for West, who was second on the team.



SONNY BROCKWAY

BO ON THE GO — Freshman Bo Jackson led the way for Ohio State with 15 carries for 112 yards (7.5 avg.) and a 1-yard touchdown in the 48-10 victory over UCLA. He had a 32-yard run in the second quarter.

Early in the Big Ten schedule, it seemed as if the Buckeyes' run game was going to be a weak point of the offense. In the win over Washington, the first conference game of the season, Ohio State rushed for 149 yards.

That number fell in the three following weeks, bottoming out at 98 yards against Wisconsin.

But now Ohio State has put it on the field for three straight weeks. Again, it hasn't been against the greatest competition, but with 164 yards against Penn State, 170 at Purdue, and now the game the Buckeyes had against the Bruins, there is much more confidence in the running backs room than there was earlier in the season.

The head coach is gaining more and more confidence with the young running backs each week as they gain more in-game experience.

"We've had over 70 carries (in two games combined) the last two weeks, which is great," Day said. "I think the more these young backs carry the ball, the better they're going to be. I've said that all along. We're going to need them with the teams we're about to play."

Peoples credits running backs coach Carlos Locklyn for the improvements that have been made in-season.

"He's been there. He's always encouraging and keeping us as one in the running back room, talking to us daily and having a mindset of every day coming to work," Peoples said. "It could be good, it could be bad, no matter the circumstance, that's what we have to do. I'm really appreciative of Coach and what he's done up to this point, and we have to keep going."

According to Peoples, there's also important leadership from Donaldson, who is by far the eldest of the four backs with four seasons of experience, including this year.

"He talks to us, he keeps us encouraged with all the young guys and all of that," Peoples said. "He's also a person that's present and gives you his insight of what he's been through in his career."

But as any football coach would say – like Day did after the game – it's more than just the running backs who have to do their jobs for the run game to work. The offensive line, tight ends and wide receivers all have to hit their blocks so that there are holes to run through.

"Everybody is involved with the run game," Day said. "It starts with the offensive line and tight ends, but (everyone) is involved. At the end of the day, it seemed like the running backs were getting downhill and running physical."

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SONNY BROCKWAY

ON THE RUN — Isaiah West has made the most of limited chances, and the 48-10 win vs. UCLA was no exception. He had only eight carries but turned that into 61 yards, 38 coming on a second-quarter run.

On The Horizon

When the Buckeyes played Penn State on Nov. 1, that may have been the last time that fans had some real concern about whether the team on the other sideline provided a real challenge to Ohio State, and as November rolls on, it's obvious why that's the case.

But further than that, the last game that Ohio State played that it didn't win by at least 18 points was in the month of August, when Texas came to Columbus for the season opener and the Buckeyes beat the Longhorns 14-7.

Since then, any team that could have been seen as a threat on the Buckeyes' schedule was handled easily, making many people think that the Buckeyes haven't been tested. Whether that sentiment is true or not, one thing that is undeniably true is that since that win over the Longhorns, the Buckeyes haven't had to play in a game that was close deep into the second half.

That also likely won't be the case when Rutgers comes to town on Nov. 22.

However, any Buckeye fan who has been around for any period of the 120-year history of The Game knows that when Ohio State heads to Ann Arbor, Mich., on Nov. 29, there will almost certainly be some adversity to deal with.

Of course, Day and the Buckeyes are saying that they are focused on the Scarlet Knights game coming up. But every fan can feel the four-game losing streak to the Wolverines looming and the chance to end that coming up very quickly.

With an 80-10 record as the head coach at Ohio State and now a national championship added to the résumé, it's no secret that the inability to beat the Wolverines is the only stain on Day's growing legacy.

As has been posted, written and spoken about countless times since the stunning 13-10 finish on Nov. 30, 2024, Ohio State hasn't lost to Michigan five straight times since the 1920s.

The loss last season is one that seems to have changed Day, which the players who are back for this season noticed.

Junior wide receiver Brandon Inniss said as much after the win over UCLA when asked if he thought that Day's mindset had shifted since last season.

"It's not necessarily different, but I would say Coach Day has a different look on his life," Inniss said. "A lot of people see it. I just feel like ever since we lost to The Team Up North last year, he has been a different Coach Day."

But no matter how different Day's approach has been this season, there's no missing how much this upcoming chance to end the streak means to him.

With Rutgers on the schedule before the Wolverines, Day was never going to invoke the Michigan game after the UCLA win by talking about the Wolverines. But reading into many of his comments made after the game, it's a pretty safe guess to say that he can feel it coming.

With wide receiver Carnell Tate out for the second straight game and Jeremiah Smith getting pulled out of the win over the Bruins after bringing in four catches

for 40 yards, Day noted after the game that the coaching staff was looking forward with those choices, wanting to keep their players healthy for what is coming up.

"Jeremiah was having a little bit of a nagging issue, and we wanted to be sure that we were being really smart with him, as we know what's coming down the road here," he said.

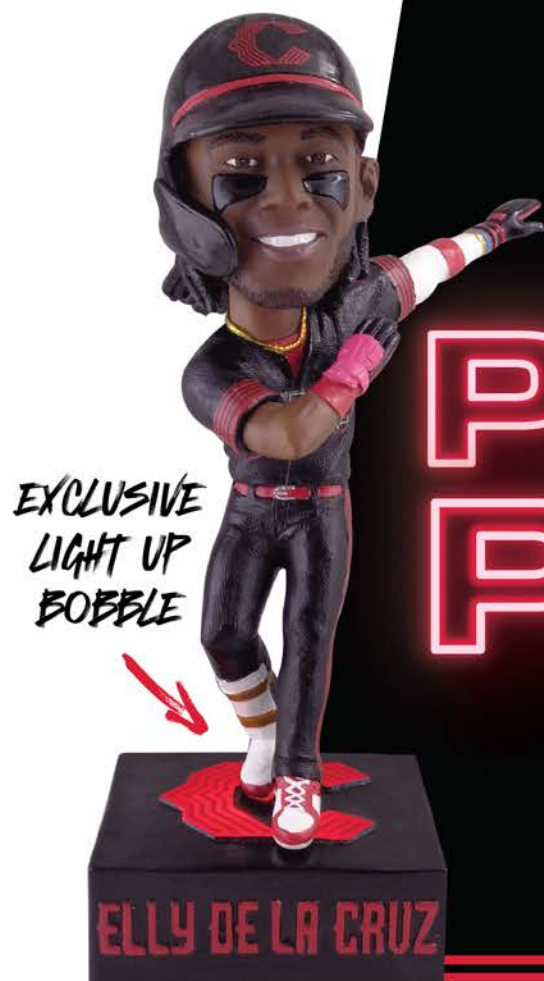
He said a similar thing when talking about needing to improve the run game as much as they can before they get to those important games.

"It certainly wasn't perfect, but that's what we need to get to because the precision and the execution that needs to happen here in the next few weeks is going to be very important."

But as has been the case each and every week, the Buckeyes match up against another opponent that would need to have close to a perfect game to beat them, and Inniss said they won't look too far forward.

Ohio State made sure it didn't do that against UCLA, especially after quarterback Nico Iamaleava was ruled out the morning of the game, just to make sure the Buckeyes didn't fall victim to the type of surprise upset that every college football fan is very familiar with.

"We still had to sit down and realize that it doesn't matter who goes on the field, we've got to do our job," Inniss said. "You see some of the other teams around the country take a step off or whatnot. But Coach Day has been a person who's been steady on that we're not letting up. It doesn't matter who we play."



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Buckeyes' WR Depth Tested Against UCLA

For the second game in a row, Ohio State wasn't completely healthy at receiver. The Buckeyes were missing star junior receiver Carnell Tate for the entire game with an undisclosed injury, and sophomore receiver Jeremiah Smith, who before the game was listed on Ohio State's availability report as questionable, didn't play for the entire second half.

GAME NOTEBOOK Bobby Gorbett

"Jeremiah had a certain amount of plays," coach Ryan Day said. "We were just going to hold him and make sure that he's at 100 percent next week. We decided to hold Carnell this week, as well. They gave us an opportunity to play some of the younger guys."

Tate and Smith's injuries didn't prevent Ohio State's offense from moving the ball in its 48-10 win over UCLA on Nov. 15. Ohio State finished the game with 440 total yards, and a sizable chunk of that came from the passing attack.

In Tate and Smith's absence, several players stepped up, but perhaps the most unheralded receiver to make an impact was sophomore Bryson Rodgers. Headed into the Buckeyes' win, Rodgers only had nine catches for 98 yards for his career, but against the Bruins, Rodgers went for 27 yards and his first-career touchdown on two catches.

Rodgers' touchdown came on a pivotal fourth-and-5 play from UCLA's 11-yard line when the outcome was still somewhat in question with Ohio State leading 10-0. On the play, Rodgers didn't get open immediately on his crossing route, but quarterback Julian Sayin continued to look in his direction after rolling out of the pocket. Rodgers was

able to get open by cutting away from the sideline back toward the field of play. Sayin hit Rodgers at the goal line, and he fell forward for his first collegiate score.

Rodgers wasn't the only one to earn more opportunities with Smith and Tate on the sidelines. Junior receiver Brandon Inniss finished the game with a career-high six receptions for 30 yards.

Going for only 30 yards, Inniss didn't necessarily have an explosive catch, but most of his receptions came on important plays. Four of Inniss' six catches came on either third or fourth downs, and three of them resulted in conversions.

Day was happy to see Inniss have a solid performance.

"Brandon is a captain, and he has a big voice," Day said. "He's a very competitive guy and certainly has heart and soul that you want from a captain. He's a very good football player. He's a competitive guy. He can do a lot of things. It was great to see him have six catches tonight. Those were big catches, a lot of them were."

Youngsters Mylan Graham (three catches for 40 yards) and Quincy Porter (one catch for 14 yards) also earned playing time. Graham particularly flashed on one play in the third quarter. The five-star recruit hauled in a pass from Sayin on a slant route and gained 21 yards for Ohio State's longest pass play of the game.

Graham, whose three catches in the win were a career high, and Porter impressed Sayin with their respective performances.

"I think those young guys stepped up in a big way," Sayin said. "They did a really good job. They were able to go make some plays on the outside. Mylan had that big catch on the glance. Those guys made some great plays for us."

Special Teams Shine

For all of the right reasons, it was a day to remember for Ohio State's special teams. The unit, which at times has been a relative weakness for this year's team, had a season-best performance in the team's win over UCLA.

By far the biggest play made by Ohio State's special teams was a 100-yard kick return touchdown from graduate nickel cornerback Lorenzo Styles Jr. It was the first kick return touchdown the Buckeyes have had since former running back Jordan Hall returned a kick 85 yards for a score in Ohio State's 37-7 win over Michigan in 2010.

Styles' streak-ending return came in the third quarter after UCLA scored its first and only touchdown of the game late in the frame. Styles caught the kick a few yards into the end zone and immediately cut to the right side of the field to surge through a gaping hole created by the Buckeyes' kick-return team. Styles needed only to cut past UCLA kicker Mateen Bhaghani to create a clear path to the end zone. With UCLA's kick coverage team behind him, the former receiver used his speed to coast into the end zone and put Ohio State up 41-7 after the extra point.

Day gave quality control coach Nate Ebner credit for helping the team make the most of the return.

"Lorenzo, you could see the speed," Day



SONNY BROCKWAY

STYLISH RETURN — Lorenzo Styles Jr. (3) had Ohio State's first kickoff return for a touchdown since Jordan Hall went 85 yards vs. Michigan in 2010. Styles officially went 100 yards, although he was a yard or two deeper. The last Buckeye with a triple-digit kickoff return was Ted Ginn against Minnesota in 2005.

said. "He was rolling. We assigned each special teams unit to a coach, and Nate Ebner has that group. I thought he did a great job. First off, you have to get buy-in from the players. They have to believe that it's going to go. We haven't had many opportunities this year. We put that return in this week.

"We knew that we may not get that many opportunities at it, and Nate said, 'I really want to take a shot at this thing.' So when it was taken a yard or 2 out of the end zone, Lorenzo said, 'Once I took it out, I knew I had to score a touchdown, so I better get running.' He didn't have a choice. I agreed with him. But it's the buy-in from everybody. That's how it works. All it takes is one guy. How many times have you heard on a return — 'If we just made one more block, it would have gone.' That's what it takes."

Styles said while he enjoyed scoring his first touchdown as a Buckeye, his favorite part was celebrating with his younger brother, linebacker Sonny Styles.

"The kick return, it was cool. But the best feeling is celebrating with your teammates but, most of all, my brother," the elder Styles said. "I have my brother there, and for him to be so excited for me, telling me

how sweet he thought that play was, it felt great. It's a blessing."

Although Styles' return was the biggest highlight-reel play of the game, the Buckeyes also blocked a punt. After Ohio State's defense forced a stop late in the second quarter, UCLA had to punt from deep in its own territory. UCLA punter Will Karoll got the snap at his own 10-yard line and seemingly had enough time to get the punt off, but for some reason, he kicked the ball off the side of his foot and straight into the chest of Caden Curry, who was standing 5 yards away. Karoll got on the loose football, but he was tackled 21 yards short of the first down marker at his own 14-yard line.

Curry joked after the game that it was his mere presence that caused the punting miscue by Karoll.

"I'm going to claim for myself it was the intimidation factor," Curry said. "I kind of got back there, and he just put it there. So I'll take it."

Sayin Overcomes Injury

Without his two favorite pass-catchers on the field for much of the game, Sayin was not as productive as he usually has

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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

Ohio State found success in every phase of its special teams in its 48-10 win over UCLA on Nov. 15.

The Buckeyes’ first of their two explosive plays on special teams came just before the half. With 16 seconds remaining before the midway break, UCLA was forced to punt from its own 22-yard line. However, disaster struck for the Bruins as Will Karoll’s punt came off his leg low, allowing Ohio State defensive end Caden Curry to get a hand on the kick and force a loss of 8 on the punt. The punt block set the Buckeyes up on the UCLA 14-yard line with 10 seconds left, allowing Ohio State to extend its lead to 27-0 with a field goal just before halftime.

Following UCLA’s first and only touchdown drive of the game with 17 seconds left in the third quarter, Ohio State responded in emphatic fashion. Buckeye kick returner Lorenzo Styles Jr. took UCLA kicker Mateen Bhaghani’s kickoff 100 yards to the house for an Ohio State touchdown. It marked the first time since Nov. 27, 2010, that Ohio State returned a kickoff for a score.

To top it off, on Ohio State’s only punt of the day, junior Joe McGuire booted the football 51 yards down the field from the Buckeye 16 to UCLA’s 33-yard line, flipping the field on the Bruins after it was returned for just 4 yards. The 51-yard boot was McGuire’s second-longest punt of the season and just his third 50-plus yard kick of the season.

Ohio State kicker Jayden Fielding also made both of his field-goal attempts and was a perfect 6 of 6 on extra-point attempts against UCLA. Fielding put in a 41-yard field goal in the waning moments of the first quarter and a 33-yard kick just one second before the half.

What Didn’t Work

After a dominant first half in which Ohio State jumped out to a 27-0 lead against UCLA, the Buckeye defense, particularly its second unit, struggled to keep the Bruins in front at times in the

second half. Ohio State secured back-to-back stops to open the third quarter, but UCLA lit the Buckeyes up through the air on its next two drives.

On the Bruins’ third drive of the second half, UCLA followed a 5-yard rush with a 51-yard pass play from quarterback Luke Duncan to wide receiver Rico Flores Jr. Three plays later, Duncan found wide receiver Kwazi Gilmer for an 18-yard catch and score.

On the Bruins’ following possession, it took UCLA 12 plays to march 61 yards down the field for a 32-yard field goal. Duncan was 6 of 7 with 53 yards passing on the drive.

Play Of The Game

Ohio State’s victory featured a 32-yard rush by freshman Bo Jackson and a 38-yard scamper from fellow rookie Isaiah West. However, it was sophomore running back James Peoples who stole the show at Ohio Stadium on Nov. 15. Following UCLA’s fourth straight punt in the first half, Ohio State drove 81 yards down the field in just under two minutes. Peoples capped off the five-play drive with his 19-yard highlight-reel touchdown. Ohio State found itself on the Bruins’ 19-yard line after West’s 38-yard explosion, two short passes, and a UCLA pass interference penalty. Then on first-and-10, Peoples took an outside handoff, burst through a hole to get to the edge, and treaded the sideline before leaping over Bruins defensive back Cole Martin, all while keeping his balance for a 19-yard touchdown run. The hurdle-and-score was Peoples’ first touchdown of the season. The San Antonio native rushed six times for 42 yards and two touchdowns in the victory. In 2025, Peoples has totaled 58 carries for 289 yards and two touchdowns, as well as 10 receptions for 50 yards.

— Sam Cipriani

been this season. Against the Bruins, Ohio State’s Heisman hopeful finished the game completing 23 of 31 passes (74.2 percent) for 184 yards and a touchdown.

With Smith on the field, Sayin was his usual efficient self in the first half. The Carlsbad, Calif., native threw for 147 yards and a touchdown on 18-of-21 passing. Then in the second half, Sayin didn’t connect perfectly with his new targets. In the third quarter, Sayin completed only 5 of 10 passes for 37 yards and at times struggled slightly with his accuracy.

Sayin also had a slight injury concern during the first quarter. After taking a hit on an 8-yard completion to Max Klare, Sayin was slow to get up and could be seen grasping his ankle. After the game, Sayin said he was feeling good and that his ankle injury didn’t cause any inaccuracies during the game.

“I was able to step into all my throws with power,” Sayin said. “I had a couple of misses tonight. Mechanically, I just wasn’t super perfect with all of those. But I was able to step into all of my throws.”

Overall, Sayin’s 184 passing yards were his lowest total since Ohio State’s 34-16 win over Illinois (166 yards) on Oct. 11, but that also had to do with Ohio State’s production on the ground. Still, Sayin has already identified areas of his game that he wants to improve.

“I think all around I can be better,” Sayin said. “I can be getting through my reads quicker, helping us out in protection a little better and helping us out in the run game more. All around, I’m trying to improve and bring my game to the next level.”

Ohio State’s dominant performance meant backup quarterback Lincoln Kienholz was able to get on the field. Attempting his first pass since Ohio State’s 37-9 win over Minnesota on Oct. 4, Kienholz was efficient in relief of Sayin. In garbage time, the third-year quarterback threw for 34 yards on 3-of-3 passing and helped lead Ohio State’s second-teamers to a

fourth-quarter touchdown.

Defense Dominates Early

Without starting quarterback Nico Iamaleava, UCLA’s offense was no match for Ohio State’s first-team defense. With Iamaleava sidelined with a concussion, UCLA struggled to find any rhythm in the first half.

After the first 30 minutes, the Bruins not only trailed 27-0 but had totaled only 50 yards as a team. Sophomore quarterback Luke Duncan completed 7 of 10 first-half passes, but that amounted to only 21 yards.

For an Ohio State defense that hasn’t come close to meeting its match through 10 games, Iamaleava’s absence was disappointing news. The Buckeyes had already formulated a game plan around the five-star quarterback’s skill set, only for it to be announced early the morning of the game that he would not be able to play because of a concussion he had suffered in UCLA’s 28-21 loss to Nebraska the week prior.

“It kind of sucks when you prepare for somebody all week and then they bring out somebody else,” Curry said. “It’s not our problem, it’s theirs. We just have to go out there and play our game and get ready for anything that comes ahead.”

The Buckeyes certainly seemed to adjust well on the fly. The Silver Bullets gave up only two first downs during the entire half. Styles agreed it was unfortunate the Buckeyes didn’t get to match up against Iamaleava, whom they handled well last year in a 42-17 win over Tennessee in the first round of the College Football Playoff.

“It doesn’t really matter who our opponent is,” Styles said. “We have to go dominate them. Having their starting quarterback out, that was tough for them. But for us, we’ve got to go do our job and go dominate whatever opponent we play.”

Styles and Curry were both defensive players who had strong performances against the Bruins. Both defenders finished the game with five total tackles, which tied for the second most on the team, and Curry

was one of five Buckeyes with a tackle for loss. Sonny Styles was Ohio State’s leading tackler. He had seven total tackles, including one for loss.

The second half didn’t go as well for the Silver Bullets. With several backup players

rotating in the game, Ohio State gave up scores in back-to-back drives in the third and fourth quarters.

Still, for the entire game, the Bruins totaled only 222 yards on 48 plays (4.6-yard average).

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BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 48, UCLA 10

UCLA interim head coach Tim Skipper on quarterback Nico Iamaleava's status throughout the week and why he was officially ruled out: "At the beginning of the work week, he was not feeling well. He was out there and couldn't stay out there. So then he went in, we did all the tests and he came back diagnosed with a concussion. So he went into the concussion protocol, and he just never cleared out of that. So he wasn't able to go today."

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on Ohio State's approach to the game and how the team didn't allow Iamaleava's injury to affect their mindset: "It was pretty workmanlike. I felt we had the right approach coming in. We found out this morning that Nico may be out, so that's going to change things a little bit in terms of our approach and game planning, but not in terms of our mindset and mentality. We want to make sure we bring it every day and have that look in our eye. I thought we did that again tonight."

Day on if he was annoyed that Iamaleava was ruled out right before the game: "I mean, annoyed isn't the word. You always want to compete against the best players that you can. We were excited about competing against Nico again. But if I say it's not about the opponent, it's about us, then it has to be that way. Hopefully, he gets a chance to heal up soon and get back on the field. I think he's a great player."

Ohio State wide receiver Brandon Inniss on Day saying Ohio State has a workmanlike approach and the head coach's message to the team on a weekly basis: "Coach Day does a great job addressing our team and keeping us focused during the week. He always says, no distractions, and those are just rules that we follow. Obviously, we know we have to be locked in. We can't be a team that slips up."

Ohio State nickel back Lorenzo Styles Jr. on redeeming himself with a kick return touchdown after he didn't score on the Buckeyes' gadget punt return play against Minnesota earlier this season: "I should have scored on that punt return, too. So I knew if I had another opportunity, I had to take it to the house and represent the university, my teammates and all the work we put in."

Inniss on what made the difference on special teams against UCLA: "We're just doing our job. If one guy here misses something, now we don't have a touchdown. But everybody made their block and slam, you've got a touchdown."



SONNY BROCKWAY

TAKEDOWN — Defensive tackle Will Smith Jr. (53) and defensive end Caden Curry (92) converge on UCLA running back Anthony Woods. The Bruins had 25 rushes for 68 yards (2.7 avg.).

Styles on whether his kick return or Ohio State running back James Peoples' hurdle should make ESPN "SportsCenter's" Top 10 plays: "James Peoples. Man, I'm so happy for him to have that opportunity to make that hurdle. He got up a little bit, so that was great for him."

Peoples on what his performance says about how he's improving this season: "It just tells me the abilities that I have. I always felt like I could do it. I'm glad it was showcased today. I'm continuing to build, continuing to get better each and every day. I'm always hungry to improve."

Peoples on what allowed the running back room to get going against UCLA: "I feel like we came in and attacked really fast. Also, the offensive line and the tight ends and everything, guys were just playing as one and rocking off the ball, getting after UCLA. I just felt like everybody was really playing together and for each other today, so that ultimately, I feel like is why it worked out."

Ohio State quarterback Julian Sayin on seeing the younger players step up in the absence of multiple key contributors: "I think the running backs did a really good job. The receiver room looked great. Those younger guys stepped up for us big whether they were blocking or making big-time catches to convert on third down or fourth down. It was awesome to see their

work paying off."

Peoples on how the running backs have been able to bounce off each other when they have tough moments: "I think it's a daily thing, and it's also a growing thing. Guys come from all different backgrounds out of high school. How things were from last year to this year, it was a big adjustment. I feel like through the adversity and through things that we had to go through, of course, leading up to the season, and also being in the season, that has brought us together. All you can do is really encourage each other. They encouraged me today, and I encouraged them. I'm growing as a person, as a player, and also being selfless as a person."

Sayin on how he feels like he has improved this season: "I'm getting more comfortable in the offense. We were doing some different things tonight, spreading the ball around, playing with tempo and playing a quick game. I think that was a good thing for us."

Ohio State defensive end Caden Curry on the mindset that defensive coordinator Matt Patricia brings and what his personality is like on the field: "He's just another great guy we can go and talk to every week, day in and day out. If we have questions, he's happy to answer, and he's just a player's coach. We all love him out there. He's definitely somebody that brings energy to the sideline, and he's somebody that is just fun to play for."

Curry on if he's seen a week-to-week improvement from defensive end Kenyatta Jackson Jr. and what he feels the senior can do going forward: "Oh yeah. Day in and day out throughout the week, he's pushing to be one of those great defensive ends, as he already is. You can just see it, he's definitely getting to that point in this game where he's kind of getting more aggressive with the way he plays, and he's definitely going to get to more quarterbacks."

Skipper on UCLA coming out of half-time with better energy, and the challenge of playing the top team in the country: "I liked how we came out after halftime. I think the guys were fighting. We got some stops when we came out of the locker room. The energy levels were good in the locker room and all that good stuff. When you are playing the No. 1 team in the country, you're fighting for everything. So, I thought the guys fought. They got the best of us, and we just have to move on from here."

The Numbers Game

Ohio State 48, UCLA 10

Nov. 15, 2025 - Ohio Stadium, Columbus, Ohio

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
UCLA	0	0	7	3	10
OHIO STATE	10	17	14	7	48

First Quarter

OSU – Jackson, 1-yard rush (Fielding kick), 8:47.

OSU – Fielding, 41-yard field goal, 0:04.

Second Quarter

OSU – Rodgers, 11-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 4:41.

OSU – Peoples, 19-yard rush (Fielding kick), 1:19.

OSU – Fielding, 33-yard field goal, 0:01.

Third Quarter

OSU – West, 1-yard rush (Fielding kick), 2:27.

UCLA – Gilmer, 18-yard pass from Duncan (Bhaghani kick), 0:17.

OSU – Styles Jr., 100-yard kickoff return (Fielding kick), 0:03.

Fourth Quarter

UCLA – Bhaghani, 32-yard field goal, 8:49.

OSU – Peoples, 8-yard rush (Fielding kick), 1:54.

Att. – 104,168

Weather – Cloudy, 62 F

Team Statistics

	UCLA	OSU
First Downs	8	25
Rushing	2	12
Passing	6	12
Penalty	0	1
Rushes-Yards	25-68	33-222
Passing Yards	154	218
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	16-23-0	26-34-0
Offensive Plays	48	67
Total Net Yards	222	440
Third Down Efficiency	5-13	6-11
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-2	2-3
Punts-Avg.	6-36.8	1-51.0
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	0-0
Penalties	7-55	3-20
Time of Possession	25:01	34:59

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – UCLA: Leigber 3-21; Woods 5-20; Thomas 9-17; Berger 4-13; Frias II 2-5; Carlson 1-0; Karoll 1-(-8). **OSU:** Jackson 15-112; West 8-61; Peoples 6-42; Inniss 1-5; Kienholz 1-3; Sayin 2-(-1).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – UCLA: Duncan 16-23-0-154-1. **OSU:** Sayin 23-31-0-184-1; Kienholz 3-3-0-34-0.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – UCLA: Flores Jr. 2-59; Gilmer 4-37; Frias II 2-29; Matthews 4-18; Pedersen 1-7; Mokiao-Atimalala 1-4; Thomas 2-0. **OSU:** Smith 4-40; Graham 3-40; Inniss 6-30; Rodgers 2-27; Klare 5-26; Roberts 2-24; Porter 1-14; West 2-12; Peoples 1-5.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – UCLA: Karroll 5-44.2-49; Team 1-0.0-0. **OSU:** McGuire 1-51.0-51.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – UCLA: Matthews 1-4. **OSU:** Curry 1-11; Inniss 1-3.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – UCLA: Matthews 1-7. **OSU:** Styles Jr. 1-100.

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

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – UCLA: None. **OSU:** None.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) – UCLA: Woods 1-4. **OSU:** None.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – UCLA: Woods 1-4; Lawrence 1-1; Vaughns 1-1. **OSU:** Downs 1-2; Jackson Jr. 1-2; McDonald 1-2; Curry 1-1; Styles 1-1.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst-Tot.) – UCLA: Vaughns 3-6-9; Jackson 6-2-8; Lawrence 5-2-7; Martin 4-3-7; Pellot 2-4-6; Chisom 3-2-5; Pleasant 3-1-4; Woods 2-1-3; Smith III 2-1-3; Clark 0-2-2; Jones 0-1-1; K. Williams 1-1-2; Jordan Jr. 1-0-1; Stafford III 1-0-1; Shaw 0-1-1; Taylor 1-0-1; Bennett 0-1-1; Fuimaono 0-1-1; Hargrove 1-0-1; Busic 1-0-1. **OSU:** Styles 2-5-7; Styles Jr. 3-2-5; Curry 1-4-5; Jackson Jr. 2-2-4; Downs 1-2-3; Reese 1-2-3; Delane 1-2-3; Grady 2-1-3; McDonald 1-2-3; Pierce 2-0-2; Moore 0-2-2; Houston 1-1-2; Scott Jr. 0-1-1; Sanchez 1-0-1; Mathews Jr. 1-0-1; Atkinson 0-1-1; Alford 1-0-1; Roker 1-0-1; Smith Jr. 1-0-1; Roberts 1-0-1; Malone 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME – UCLA: Brooks, Yoon, Unije, Armella, Ford, Duncan, Woods, Thomas, Habermehl, Flores Jr., Gilmer, Jordan Jr., Lawrence, Pleasant, Martin, Jackson, Jones, Smith II, Busic, K. Williams, Vaughns, Chisom, Berger, Pellot, Clark, Mokiao-Atimalala, Stafford III, Staples, A. Williams, Matthews, Woods, Perry, M. Iamaleava, Wilson, Davillier, Benjamin, Shaw, Taylor, Frias II, Miller, Cogshell, Carlson, Pedersen, Leigber, Peterman, Mosier, Dixon, Walls, Bario, Karoll, Abdul-Wahab, Bennett, Fuimaono, Somerville, Mahe, Pulealii, Akinshilo, Walker, Marks, Fox-Flores, Weir, Renda, Bhaghani, Hargrove. **OSU:** Montgomery, Siereveld, Daniels, Hinzman, Tshabola, Sayin, Jackson, Klare, Kacmarek, Inniss, Smith, Igbinosun, Mathews Jr., Downs, Curry, Jackson Jr., Malone, McDonald, Styles, Reese, Pierce, Styles Jr., Kienholz, Scott Jr., Graham, Sanchez, Bell, Delane, Porter, West, Rodgers, Lockhart, Atkinson, Thurman, Grady, Nelson Jr., Alford, Peoples, Pettijohn, Jones, Stover, Roker, West, Fielding, Velazquez, McGuire, Ferlmann, Rudzinski, Mickens, Smith Jr., Kirks, Kema, Van Sickle, Terry, Moore, Onianwa, Adolph, Roberts, Christian, Moore, Houston.

Season Statistics

2025 Game-By-Game			
Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Aug. 30	(3) TEXAS (1)	W, 14-7	107,524
Sept. 6	(1) GRAMBLING STATE	W, 70-0	100,624
Sept. 13	(1) OHIO	W, 37-9	105,765
Sept. 27	(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, 37-0	72,795
Nov. 1	(1) PENN STATE	W, 38-14	105,517
Nov. 8	(1) at Purdue	W, 34-10	57,701
Nov. 15	(1) UCLA	W, 48-10	104,168
Nov. 22	(1) RUTGERS	12 p.m.	
Nov. 29	at Michigan (18)	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	234	128
Rushing	91	55
Passing	134	59
Penalty	9	14
Average Per Game/Rush	161.8	81.4
Average Per Game/Pass	279.5	131.2
Total Offense	4413	2126
Total Plays	635	550
Average Per Game	441.3	212.6
Average Per Play	6.9	3.9
Penalties-Yards	43-377	40-306
Fumbles-Lost	4-2	6-5
Third Down Efficiency	60-107	35-126
Percentage	56%	28%
Fourth Down Efficiency	9-13	9-23
Percentage	69%	39%
Sacks-Yards	25-175	6-39
Time Of Possession Avg.	33:23	26:34

Score								
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.	
Ohio State	75	113	90	97	0	375	37.5	
Opponents	6	23	23	23	0	75	7.5	

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Bo Jackson	110	725	6.6	3	64
James Peoples	58	289	5.0	2	33
CJ Donaldson Jr.	72	278	3.9	9	27
Isaiah West	42	238	5.7	2	38
Lincoln Kienholz	8	29	3.6	2	8
Jeremiah Smith	2	20	10.0	1	17
Julian Sayin	27	20	0.7	0	12
Brandon Inniss	3	16	5.3	0	8
Carnell Tate	2	16	8.0	0	8
Sam Dixon	3	9	3.0	1	6
Nate Roberts	2	1	0.5	0	1
Team	11	-23	-2.1	0	0
OSU Totals	340	1618	4.8	20	64
OPP Totals	295	814	2.8	3	34

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Julian Sayin	226	282	80.1	2675	25-4	186.2
Lincoln Kienholz	10	11	90.9	120	1-0	212.5
Tavien St. Clair	0	2	0.0	0	0-0	0.0
OSU Totals	236	295	80.0	2795	26-4	186.0
OPP Totals	156	255	61.2	1312	5-6	106.2

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Jeremiah Smith	69	902	13.1	10	87
Carnell Tate	39	711	18.2	7	57
Max Klare	31	295	9.5	1	29
Brandon Inniss	27	210	7.8	1	29
Bo Jackson	12	124	10.3	1	17
James Peoples	10	50	5.0	0	12
CJ Donaldson Jr.	8	56	7.0	1	14
Will Kacmarek	7	90	12.9	2	47
Jelani Thurman	6	65	10.8	1	26
Bryson Rodgers	6	79	13.2	1	21
Mylan Graham	6	93	15.5	0	23
Bennett Christian	4	11	2.8	1	6
Quincy Porter	4	59	14.8	0	22
Nate Roberts	4	30	7.5	0	15
Isaiah West	2	12	6.0	0	12
David Adolph	1	8	8.0	0	8
OSU Totals	236	2795	11.8	26	87
OPP Totals	156	1312	8.4	5	67

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Jayden Fielding	-	44-44	-	-	13-15	83
Jeremiah Smith	11	-	-	-	-	66
CJ Donaldson Jr.	10	-	-	-	-	60
Carnell Tate	7	-	-	-	-	42
Bo Jackson	4	-	-	-	-	24

Will Kacmarek	2	-	-	-	-	12
Lincoln Kienholz	2	-	-	-	-	12
James Peoples	2	-	-	-	-	12
Isaiah West	2	-	-	-	-	12
Lorenzo Styles Jr.	1	-	-	-	-	6
Bennett Christian	1	-	-	-	-	6
Max Klare	1	-	-	-	-	6
Brandon Inniss	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jelani Thurman	1	-	-	-	-	6
Bryson Rodgers	1	-	-	-	-	6
Sam Dixon	1	-	-	-	-	6
Riley Pettijohn	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jackson Courville	-	4-4	-	-	-	4
OSU Totals	48	48-48	-	-	13-15	375
OPP Totals	8	6-7	-	-	7-9	75

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Jayden Fielding	4-4	6-7	3-3	0-1	13-15
OSU Totals	4-4	6-7	3-3	0-1	13-15
OPP Totals	4-4	1-2	2-3	0-0	7-9

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Joe McGuire	17	712	41.9	0	55
Nick McLarty	1	45	45.0	0	45
OSU Totals	18	757	42.1	0	55
OPP Totals	54	2460	45.6	1	63

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
J. Mathews Jr.	2	28	14.0	0	23
Caleb Downs	2	0	0.0	0	0
Payton Pierce	1	15	15.0	0	15
Sonny Styles	1	5	5.0	0	5
OSU Totals	6	48	8.0	0	23
OPP Totals	4	4	1.0	0	4

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Brandon Inniss	13	148	11.4	0	32
Lorenzo Styles Jr.	1	36	36.0	0	36
Caden Curry	1	0	0.0	0	0
Jeremiah Smith	1	-6	-6.0	0	0
OSU Totals	16	178	11.1	0	36
OPP Totals	2	7	3.5	0	4

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Brandon Inniss	3	57	19.0	0	37
Lorenzo Styles Jr.	1	100	100.0	1	100
OSU Totals	4	157	39.3	1	100
OPP Totals	14	242	17.3	0	41

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Arvell Reese	30	28	58	10.0-45	6.5-41
Sonny Styles	32	25	57	3.5-5	0-0
Caleb Downs	29	17	46	4.0-5	0-0
Kayden McDonald	25	19	44	8.0-28	3.0-20
Caden Curry	26	17	43	11.5-54	7.0-48
Payton Pierce	17	18	35	1.5-2	0-0
Jaylen McClain	29	6	35	0-0	0-0
Davison Igbinosun	18	15	33	0.5-0	0-0
Lorenzo Styles Jr.	14	10	24	1.5-1	0-0
K. Jackson Jr.	11	8	19	8.0-42	4.5-35
J. Mathews Jr.	12	5	17	1.5-7	1.0-6
Tywone Malone	8	9	17	1.5-7	1.0-6
Will Smith Jr.	7	8	15	0-0	0-0
Zion Grady	6	5	11	2.0-12	1.0-10
Eddrick Houston	3	8	11	1.0-6	1.0-6
Beau Atkinson	3	7	10	2.5-12	1.0-9
Devin Sanchez	7	3	10	0-0	0-0
Faheem Delane	4	4	8	1.0-1	0-0
Riley Pettijohn	2	6	8	0-0	0-0
Bryce West	5	2	7	0-0	0-0
Aaron Scott Jr.	6	1	7	1.0-5	0-0
TJ Alford	3	3	6	1.0-2	0-0
C.J. Hicks	2	4	6	1.0-1	0-0
Jason Moore	1	5	6	1.0-1	0-0
Garrett Stover	4	1	5	0-0	0-0
Leroy Roker	3	2	5	0-0	0-0
Joshua Mickens	1	2	3	0-0	0-0
Eli Lee	-	2	2	0-0	0-0
Logan George	2	-	2	0-0	0-0
Eric Mensah	-	2	2	0-0	0-0
Malik Hartford	1	1	2	0-0	0-0
Carnell Tate	2	-	2	0-0	0-0
Nate Roberts	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Dominic Kirks	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
James Peoples	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Joey Velazquez	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
Jayden Fielding	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Ryan Rudzinski	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	318	246	564	61.0-229	25.0-175

OSU Must Overcome Mental Block To Beat U-M

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Through 10 games of the 2025 season, Ohio State had passed every test in front of them on the way to a 10-0 record. Unlike some of their predecessors, the Buckeyes survived an early-season nonconference bout with a loaded Texas squad, a midseason road trip out west to take on a solid Washington team, and every other game against outmatched opponents.

With a 5-5 Rutgers team on deck, it seems that the only significant roadblock in front of the Buckeyes on their quest to their first 12-0 regular season since 2019 is Michigan.

The No. 18 Wolverines may not be the most talented team the Buckeyes have faced or will face this season, but The Game has been the one stain on head coach Ryan Day's otherwise decorated résumé.

With Day at the helm, Ohio State has won 88.9 percent of its games, two Big Ten championships and a national championship but has defeated Michigan only once in five attempts.

"I think they've been a little in their own head about it," said Doug Lesmerises of the "Bill and Doug on Ohio State Football" Substack on Ohio State's issues against Michigan. "I think that can play out schematically and with in-game management. That can play out emotionally, getting the players ready for the week. I think that it got a little personal for Ryan Day with (former Michigan head coach) Jim Harbaugh, in a way that did not benefit Ryan Day at Ohio State against Jim Harbaugh at Michigan. Then obviously last year that wasn't the case, but I think they haven't quite been themselves.

"You could argue that in 2021, Michigan was the better team. I think that might just be a football thing. Since then, I think Ohio State was the better team, but Michigan has played closer to its best game than Ohio State did. I think that there is some combination of mental, emotional, schematic and physical things that prevented Ohio State from playing at its best, that would fall at the feet of the coaching."

No game better exemplified Ohio State's mental challenges against its biggest rival than last year. Despite coming into The Game as a nearly 20-point favorite led by many senior and eventual NFL-bound players, the Buckeyes were defeated 13-10 by a then 6-5 Michigan team.

Since that stunning loss, Ohio State has won 14 straight games, including the national championship, and for the most part has dominated every team in its path. With this year's edition of The Game right around the corner, BSB sat down with Eleven Warriors deputy editor Dan Hope, Lesmerises and Pat Murphy of 247Sports to determine what has gone wrong for the Buckeyes against Michigan in the past four years and what the Buckeyes' chances are to beat Michigan this year.

Michigan Woes Marked By Mental Block

In fairness to Ohio State and Day, Michigan was one of the best teams in the country in 2021, 2022 and 2023 and may have been aided by an illegal sign-stealing operation led by former staffer Connor Stalions. Still, the



FILE PHOTO

BLUE STREAK — Some feel four straight losses to Michigan have gotten into the collective heads of the Buckeyes. When coach Ryan Day moved the traditional band playing at practice during Michigan Week to earlier in the season to "normalize" the days leading to The Game, it may have signaled for better or worse that the Wolverines are always on his mind.

Buckeyes haven't seemed to play their best in The Game since at least 2019. According to Lesmerises, that's because Ohio State has played into Michigan's hands.

"Overall, to me, Ohio State has allowed Michigan to dictate terms of the game the last four seasons, and they've played it the way Michigan wants to play it instead of the way Ohio State wants to play it," Lesmerises said. "And that's a toughness conversation, that's physicality, that's Michigan limiting the opportunity for the Ohio State passing game to win the game. That's probably the overriding thing."

Michigan's strength over the last few years has been in the trenches, where it has had several All-America linemen, including Zak Zinter, Aidan Hutchinson, Mason Graham and Kenneth Grant.

Day has drawn criticism for seemingly trying to challenge Michigan's strength up front with his run game, but it wasn't always the case that Ohio State smashed its head against the Wolverine wall. In its 42-27 loss to Michigan in 2021, Ohio State threw the ball 49 times and scored 27 points but was outgained on the ground 297-64.

It was a similar story in a 45-23 loss in 2022 when Ohio State threw for nearly 350 yards but was again outgained on the ground 252-143. Those losses led to some questions about the physicality and toughness of Ohio State's program, which may have sent Day on the wrong track in his approach to The Game, according to Hope.

"I think if you even go back to that (2023 Notre Dame game) when they played in South Bend, and there was the famous Ryan Day moment of, 'I'd like to know where Lou Holtz is right now,' it's felt like in certain games, Ryan Day has had that (idea of), 'We have to prove we're a tougher team,'" Hope said. "I

think there's been an element of that these last four years in the Michigan game. I don't think we've seen that since (last season's Michigan game)."

Day's focus on toughness may have been first reflected in the 2023 edition of The Game, when Ohio State lost 30-24 and ran the ball nearly as many times as it passed the ball (30 passes, 28 runs).

In addition to losing its third straight game to the Wolverines, Ohio State was outgained on the ground for the third straight time.

When Day met with the media last year before the 2024 matchup between the two rivals, the rushing battle was a huge talking point. On multiple occasions, Day brought up the fact that the team that wins the rushing battle in The Game had won every time since 2000.

"That week in the media availability we got with Day, and on his radio show, he definitely brought up the team that wins the rushing battle wins the game on more than one occasion," Murphy said. "Clearly, if that was a message to us in the media, it was also a message to his staff and players and whatnot. I think stuff has come out about that post-Michigan game meeting, where players said, 'That doesn't make sense with the way that we play.'"

"I think when you combine that with (former Ohio State offensive coordinator) Chip Kelly — who wants to run the football, that's his specialty — I don't think he was going to turn down an opportunity to try and come up with ways to run at Michigan's talented interior defensive line."

Kelly, the Buckeyes' play-caller last year, certainly did not hesitate in repeatedly calling run plays against the Wolverine front.

Despite boasting three of the most talented receivers in college football in Emeka Egbuka, Carnell Tate and Jeremiah Smith and

going against a Michigan defensive line that included Graham and Grant, Ohio State once again ran the ball nearly as many times as it passed the ball (33 passes, 26 runs).

"The fact that it was so obvious that it wasn't working and they just kept doing it was the most confusing thing," said Murphy of Ohio State's insistence on running the ball last year. "I don't think it helps either that Will Howard takes that big hit in the first half and, arguably, should have come out of the game."

"Now you are playing with the quarterback who's not 100 percent, so I think it's a combination of that. But I certainly think that there's been this mental block that Ryan Day has had that they need to run the ball, they need to show this kind of toughness that they don't in other games."

Lesmerises agreed that Day's approach to The Game last year was not the right one and pointed out that the rushing battle stat can be somewhat flawed, as the team that gets ahead early can often inflate its rushing stats late in the game.

"It's hard because Will Howard took a hit and wasn't exactly himself after that, but I don't think that should prevent Ohio State from scoring more than 10 points in a game like that," Lesmerises said. "I think that rushing (stat) — and this came up in the famous players meeting — that's kind of a fake stat. That's a stat that feeds into Michigan, and it doesn't feed into Ohio State."

"Why would you cite a stat when you are the best passing team in the country consistently, and you build your identity around that, but then in the most important game of the year, that's not what you're focused on? I think it's an odd thing. We talk about the toughness conversation all the time. I don't think Ohio State should get bogged down in the toughness conversation."

Championship Run Alleviates Pressure

Ohio State's unexpected regular-season-ending loss to Michigan was followed by a now-famous meeting that included only the players and Day.

During the meeting, several Buckeyes reportedly challenged each other, Day and Ohio State's strategy in The Game. The contentious meeting formed the Buckeyes into a more tightly bonded team and subsequently fueled an improbable run in the College Football Playoff.

As the No. 8 seed in the playoffs, Ohio State won four consecutive games over teams ranked inside the CFP's top 10 and captured its first national championship in a decade.

Within that playoff run, Ohio State also proved it could pass the ball early to set up success on the ground later in the game in its 42-17 win over Tennessee.

Despite playing in frigid temperatures, Howard threw for 220 yards and a touchdown while completing 17 of 21 passes in the first half, and Ohio State jumped out to a 21-10 lead.

Murphy said the Tennessee game was evidence that the Buckeyes can beat the Wolverines in the regular-season finale even when the weather may not necessarily set up perfectly for a pass-first approach.

"If you look at how successful they were in the Tennessee game, which I think is the

closest comparison given it's cold and what not, you're not playing in a controlled environment, and it's like, 'Oh, hey, we can still go out against what is a good defense and throw the ball around,' " Murphy said. "So why does that change in the Michigan game?"

Ohio State's national championship win has made Day seem a bit more loose when dealing with the media, and he and offensive coordinator Brian Hartline haven't had an offensive game plan as peculiar as the one the Buckeyes had against Michigan last year.

Although it's never easy to predict The Game, it appears that Ohio State should be led by a coach without as much pressure on him when it takes on Michigan.

"You would think if anything is going to allow Ohio State to play more freely, more confident in that game, it would be winning the national championship last year," Hope said. "I think that certainly takes a big weight off Ryan Day's back. You've seen all year that he's more confident because of what happened last year. Going into last year, he knew it was like, 'If I lose this game, my job could be on the line.' Whereas this year, he knows he has job security because of what happened last year."

Still, Day's track record against Michigan is starting to be similar to that of former Buckeye coach John Cooper, who finished his 13-year coaching career at Ohio State with a 2-10-1 record against the Wolverines.

At times under Cooper, Ohio State's losing streak against Michigan almost felt like a burden on the program, but because of the way the postseason is now set up, the pressure on Day to win The Game is a little different, according to Lesmerises.

"There are two paths now," he said of having a successful season. "Beating Michigan is one path, and winning the national championship is another path. Back in the old days, they were the same path, because how could you have ever win the national championship if you didn't win the Ohio State vs. Michigan game? You practically had to be undefeated to win the national championship, or maybe have one loss, but you weren't going to lose your last game of the regular season and then go on and win the national championship. Now you can, and Ohio State did it last year."

"The idea and the debate (of) ... what matters more, beating Michigan or winning the national championship? And the actual answer is, they both matter the most. Before they were the same, and now they're not the same. Now they are two (different) paths. To me, in this world, at least one of the paths has to be going well. They won on the other path, and so that doesn't mean that the Michigan path doesn't matter, but it takes a little bit of the pressure off of it."

It wasn't just Day who felt intense pressure to beat Michigan for the first time since 2019 last year, but also a group of seniors who hadn't defeated the Wolverines throughout their entire careers.

Team captains Egbuka, TreVeyon Henderson, Jack Sawyer and Cody Simon had significant roles on multiple Ohio State teams that had tried and failed against Michigan.

This year, though, the Buckeyes are led by a group that has limited experience against the Wolverines. Star players junior safety Caleb Downs, Smith, junior linebacker Arvell Reese and redshirt-freshman quarterback Julian Sayin have little to no experience in The Game.

According to Murphy, it may help the Buckeyes to be led by a younger group of players

without an abundance of scar tissue in The Game.

"I think there's something to the fact that they haven't gone through it over and over again," Murphy said. "Maybe Jack Sawyer and JT Tuimoloau woke up the day of the game last year, thinking, 'Oh gosh, we can't lose this.' Now these guys, and even a guy like Jeremiah Smith, who made the comments in the offseason about not losing to Michigan again – he's experienced losing to Michigan, and it hurts, he saw the pain on those guys, but also he saw that you can turn this around and whatnot. The pressure of getting the monkey off your back, I think, may not be there as much."

"Now I say that, and then we get to game week, and all these guys are going to hear about is how they've lost four in a row and whatnot. So (the pressure) will be there. But I think that it may not have the same weight as guys that have gone through it year after year after year previously."

Experts Say OSU Team Better Than U-M

A lot has changed since Ohio State lost to Michigan in 2024. The Wolverines' quarterback, Bryce Underwood, a true freshman and five-star recruit, is a much more talented option than any signal caller the Wolverines had last year.

Encouragingly for the Buckeyes, Michigan no longer has Graham and Grant at defensive tackle. Still, Hope feels like Ohio State's first priority against Michigan should be using arguably the best passing attack in the country.

"I think we've seen that running the ball continues to be this team's weakness," Hope said. "Based on what we've seen, they have the best quarterback in the country. They have maybe the two best receivers in the country, certainly the best receiving tandem in the country. They have the best defense in the country. The one area where Ohio State is not the best in the country right now is its running game. I think, much like last year, I would say they need to play to their strengths."

"Now that doesn't mean that they don't have to be able to run the ball, but I think that the No. 1 goal on offense going into this

game should not be to run the ball down their throats. It should be to make big plays through the air because you have Julian Sayin, you have Jeremiah Smith, you have Carnell Tate. That's where you have the advantage over Michigan's defense."

For all the changes that the Wolverines and Buckeyes have gone through since last season, what has remained the same is that Day's group is better on paper.

The Buckeyes rank ahead of the Wolverines in passing offense, passing defense, rushing defense, scoring offense and scoring defense. But if last year is any proof, the underdog cannot be ruled out of The Game under any circumstances.

With Michigan having home-field advantage, Hope does not feel very confident that Ohio State will finally beat its rival.

"On paper, I think (Ohio State) should win, but because of what happened last year, it still kind of feels almost like a toss-up to me," Hope said. "If I were putting a percentage on it right now, I would probably put my confidence level for Ohio State in that game somewhere around 65 percent. I think Ohio State is the better team. I think Ohio State should win."

"I think that Ohio State will play with more confidence this year, because it has a national championship now and because things have gone so well this season, but it's on the road. It's going to be one of the best rushing offenses they have faced all year and one of the best defenses they have faced all year. I think Michigan is capable of winning this game, and if Ohio State doesn't play its A-game, it could certainly lose."

As BSB went to press, Michigan was 8-2 and 6-1 in the Big Ten. Lesmerises agreed with Hope that the Wolverines aren't better than the Buckeyes but cautioned not to take them for granted.

"I hope Ohio State fans have learned not to underestimate Michigan. I think that would be a silly thing to do," Lesmerises said. "Is Bryce Underwood a perfect quarterback? No, he's not. He's a very young, talented quarterback who is better than he was at the beginning of the year. They have let him run at times. I think they have two real running backs. I think their offensive line still has an identity. It is

probably not as good as it was (at their peak) in 2023.

"They still have some good players on the defensive line and good linebackers. I think Wink Martindale is a good defensive coordinator, but Ohio State is better. There's no doubt about it that Ohio State's better. I would give Ohio State a very good chance of winning, except that you have to keep the door open to something happening with Ohio State that prevents them from playing their best."

On the off chance that the Buckeyes are outplayed and outscored by the Wolverines, they would suffer their fifth straight loss in The Game for the first time since the 1920s.

Ohio State's fourth straight loss to Michigan was followed by a reaction from the fan base that was so negative the Day family had to surround their house with armed guards.

Hope, Murphy and Lesmerises agreed that even if a spot in the playoffs was already wrapped up for the defending national champions, regardless of the result, a fifth straight loss to Michigan would not be met kindly by the Buckeye faithful.

"I'd like to think it wouldn't (be as negative as it was last year), but it probably will, because it's that game, it's that rivalry," Hope said. "If you assume Ohio State doesn't have an inexplicable loss against UCLA or Rutgers, even if they lose that game, they're still going to be in the College Football Playoff, just like we saw last year. You'd like to think that it wouldn't be like, 'Oh, my God, the sky is falling, fire everybody,' but that rivalry means so much to this program."

"Honestly, the biggest thing for the fan base is they are sick of having Michigan fans in their ear for the last four years, talking trash every day about how Ohio State can't beat Michigan, about how Ryan Day can't beat Michigan. The only way to stop that is to beat them this year."

This story would normally run in the Michigan Preview issue, but because many BSB readers will not receive their Michigan Preview before The Game, we are running it in this issue so the story is not outdated when you read it.



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Rutgers Sputtering Through Challenging Season

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

Coming off back-to-back winning seasons for the first time since 2011-12, there was a cautious sense of optimism surrounding the Rutgers football team heading into the 2024 campaign.

Despite the program's most successful stretch in over a decade, that hope was tempered by history. The Rutgers football program has long been marred by inconsistency and limited success, particularly since joining the Big Ten in 2014, where the Scarlet Knights have routinely struggled to keep pace with the conference's elite.

The same can be said for Rutgers during the 2025 season.

The Scarlet Knights jumped out to a 3-0 record with two straight wins against two of the top four teams in the Mid-American Conference in Ohio (34-31 victory) and the Miami RedHawks (45-17), as well as a 60-10 thrashing of FCS opponent Norfolk State.

Then Rutgers entered Big Ten play, and the season quickly flipped on its head. Against the Scarlet Knights' first four Big Ten opponents, Rutgers lost by an average of 19.5 points per game. That average is largely inflated by a 56-10 loss to then-No. 8 Oregon on Oct. 18, but losses to Big Ten opponents have been a defining pattern of Rutgers over the last decade. In the last six seasons under head coach Greg Schiano, the Scarlet Knights have a 15-37 record in conference.

Following its four straight losses, Rutgers has gone 2-1 in its last three games. That included a comeback win over Purdue where kicker Jai Patel drilled two field goals in the final 1:06 of the game to clinch a 27-24 victory at Ross-Ade Stadium on Oct. 25, as well as a 35-13 loss at Illinois on Nov. 1 and a 35-20 win over Maryland on Nov. 8 at home.

Of its seven conference games, Rutgers has played five opponents with six or more wins, and all have been losses. Against Big Ten teams with fewer than five wins, the Scarlet Knights are 2-0, along with a perfect 3-0 vs. Group of Five and FCS competition.

Rutgers has a challenging final two games to finish its season. Following an off week, the Scarlet Knights now travel to Columbus to take on No. 1 Ohio State before returning to Piscataway, N.J., for their season finale against Penn State in a matchup that could ultimately decide Rutgers' bowl eligibility.

Schiano said that, although as a program you always hope to win at least six games and maintain bowl eligibility, his main goal as a coach is to improve his team and players on a daily basis.

"Certainly, that is out there," he said. "The minimum of a year is that you want to get to a bowl game. That is not our goal around here. I've said this many times. We did not come back just to do that. Do I want to do that? Yeah, I want to do that. I want to do it for a lot of reasons. They deserve it."

Rutgers' high-flying pass attack is the highlight of the 5-5 team. The Scarlet Knights are led by senior quarterback Athan Kaliakmanis, who spent three years at Minnesota and started in 17 games for the Gold-

en Gophers before transferring to Rutgers for the 2024 season.

He has thrown for 2,705 yards, the 13th-best total in the FBS this season, while passing for 17 touchdowns and seven interceptions. His 2,705 yards are the sixth most in a single season in school history, and Kaliakmanis is on pace to jump into the top five by the end of the year.

The transfer quarterback's 17 touchdowns are 37th nationally, while his 62.3 completion percentage ranks 71st in the country. He has minus-2 yards rushing on 80 attempts, a total heavily skewed by sacks, but has still found the end zone three times on the ground.

Schiano indicated that Kaliakmanis' mentality is an example for the rest of the Rutgers program of what they should strive to be, adding that the senior quarterback is a leader on and off the field.

"I'm really proud of Athan," Schiano said. "I said it before he came in here as a transfer. We had an incoming quarterback, and he had to beat the guy out. I love the way he did it. Came in, didn't do politics, he didn't try to become buddies. He came in and worked, and everybody recognized that."

"Then he got the chance to be the starting quarterback, at midseason last year, and his career took off. I think he picked it up where he left off. This season has been a little choppy. To have back-to-back 2,500 (yard passing seasons) and we still have two games and maybe more to play – he's been a great leader. I've said to people, he's taken over this team. He's not only the leader of this offense, he's the leader of this team."



Greg Schiano

Kaliakmanis' top wideouts consist of sophomore KJ Duff, junior Ian Strong and senior DT Sheffield. Duff is the Scarlet Knights' leading receiver, racking up 53 catches for 923 yards and six touchdowns, averaging 92.3 yards per game, while Strong follows close behind with 48 catches for 716 yards and five scores in eight games.

Sheffield, Rutgers' bona fide wide receiver three, has hauled in 40 receptions for 532 and four touchdowns. The Scarlet Knights' top three wide receivers account for 78.3 percent of the team's total passing offense, while the No. 4 pass catcher, tight end Kenny Fletcher Jr., has 18 catches for 131 yards through the air.

The Scarlet Knights' rushing attack, on the other hand, has been solid, but not spectacular.

Rutgers' top ball carrier, sophomore running back Antwan Raymond, has rushed for exactly 1,000 yards and 11 touchdowns on 200 carries. The Montreal, Quebec, native has also added 15 catches for 163 yards and a receiving score.

Raymond is coming off the best performance of his career in the win over Maryland, a 41-carry, 240-yard, one-touchdown day that had the sophomore earn Doak Walker National Running Back of the Week honors. As a whole, Rutgers is averaging

Get To Know ... Rutgers

- **2025 Record:** 5-5, 2-5 Big Ten.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Spread; Defensive Formation – 4-2-5; Starters returning – Offense 5, Defense 1, Specialists 1.
- **Head Coach:** Greg Schiano, 17th year at Rutgers over two stints, 98-106.
- **Series History:** 11th meeting; Ohio State leads 10-0.
- **School Facts:** Location – Piscataway, N.J.; Enrollment – 69,000; Nickname – Scarlet Knights; Colors – Scarlet; Conference – Big Ten; Stadium – SHI Stadium (Surface – FieldTurf; Capacity – 52,454).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Antwan Raymond	200	1,000	5.0	11
Ja'shon Benjamin	61	307	5.0	2

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
A. Kaliakmanis	203-326	62.3	2,705	17-7

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
KJ Duff	53	923	17.4	6
Ian Strong	48	716	14.9	5
DT Sheffield	40	532	13.3	4
Kenny Fletcher	18	131	7.3	0

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game – 29.9
Rushing Yards Per Game – 143.1
Passing Yards Per Game – 277.4
Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 420.5

2025 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Aug. 28	OHIO	W, 34-31
Sept. 6	MIAMI (OHIO)	W, 45-17
Sept. 13	NORFOLK STATE	W, 60-10
Sept. 19	IOWA	L, 38-28
Sept. 27	at Minnesota	L, 31-28
Oct. 10	at Washington	L, 38-19
Oct. 18	OREGON	L, 56-10
Oct. 25	at Purdue	W, 27-24
Nov. 1	at Illinois	L, 35-13
Nov. 8	MARYLAND	W, 35-20
Nov. 22	at Ohio State	Noon
Nov. 29	PENN STATE	TBA

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Jett Elad	41	21	62	2.5-7	0-0
Kaj Sanders	34	23	57	0-0	0-0
Dariel Djabome	21	33	54	2.5-6	1-3
Abram Wright	24	27	51	0.5-1	0-0
Bo Mascoe	21	16	37	2-3	0-0

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD
Jett Elad	2	40	20.0	0
Bo Mascoe	1	68	68.0	0
Cam Miller	1	0	0	0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed – 30.0
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 196.5
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 229.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 425.5

just 143.1 yards per ground, the 86th-best rushing attack in the FBS.

Along Rutgers' offensive line are left tackle Tyler Needham, left guard Byran Felter, center Gus Zilinskas, right guard Kwabena Asamoah, and right tackle Taj White. The Scarlet Knights' front five has allowed 3.1 sacks per game, the 124th-best rate in the country.

The Scarlet Knights' defense, however, is Rutgers' Achilles' heel. Rutgers is allowing 30 points per game, the nation's 106th-best mark, over 10 games this season, while the Scarlet Knights' rush defense is particularly problematic. Rutgers is allowing a whopping 196.5 yards per game to rank 123rd in yards allowed on the ground.

Defensively, the Scarlet Knights are led by safeties Jett Elad and Kaj Sanders. Elad has a team-leading 62 tackles (41 solo), two interceptions and one forced fumble. Sanders has brought down defenders for 57 tackles (34 solo) and recorded one pass breakup. The pair has also served as two of Rutgers' three main punt returners, along with the wide receiver Sheffield.

At cornerback, the Scarlet Knights feature seniors Jacobie Henderson and Cam Miller as well as junior Bo Mascoe. Henderson and Miller are tied for Rutgers' lead with five breakups each, while Mascoe is third on the team with three. Overall, Rutgers' secondary is allowing 229.0 passing yards per contest.

On its defensive line, Rutgers showcases starting defensive ends Eric O'Neill and Jordan Walker on the edge, as well as defensive tackles Keshon Griffin and Zaire Angoy among an interior line group that rotates frequently. The pair of interior linemen has been inconsistent on a unit that struggles against the run, combining for just 21 tack-

les and three TFLs this season.

O'Neill is the Scarlet Knights' team leader with 7½ tackles for loss and 2½ sacks, while his counterpart, Walker, has added 27 tackles, 2½ TFLs and one sack. Senior lineman Bradley Weaver has been a key rotational player on the defensive front, starting the last five games while ranking second on the team with 3½ tackles for loss and tied for first with 2½ sacks.

Manning the middle of the field are Scarlet Knights linebackers Dariel Djabome and Abram Wright.

Djabome has arguably been Rutgers' best defender outside of its safeties, ranking third on the team with 55 tackles while tacking on 2½ TFLs, two forced fumbles and one fumble recovery. Wright has also been solid, taking down opposing offensive players for 50 tackles and breaking up two passes.

Following Rutgers' victory against Maryland, Schiano praised his team's effort and improvement but said the Scarlet Knights' defense still must continue to grow to reach its full potential.

"We are a long way from being what we want to be, but we are making incremental improvement," Schiano said. "That's all I asked them to do is just keep getting a little bit better every day. We're playing from behind. We're getting better, but we've got work to do. I'm proud of them. Giving up three points in the second half, that looked like real defense."

On special teams, Rutgers kicker Patel has buried just 12 of 17 field goals (70.6 percent), while making 33 of 35 extra-point attempts. Jakob Anderson handles the punting and averages 43.5 with a long of 68 and 7 of his 26 punts landing inside the 20.



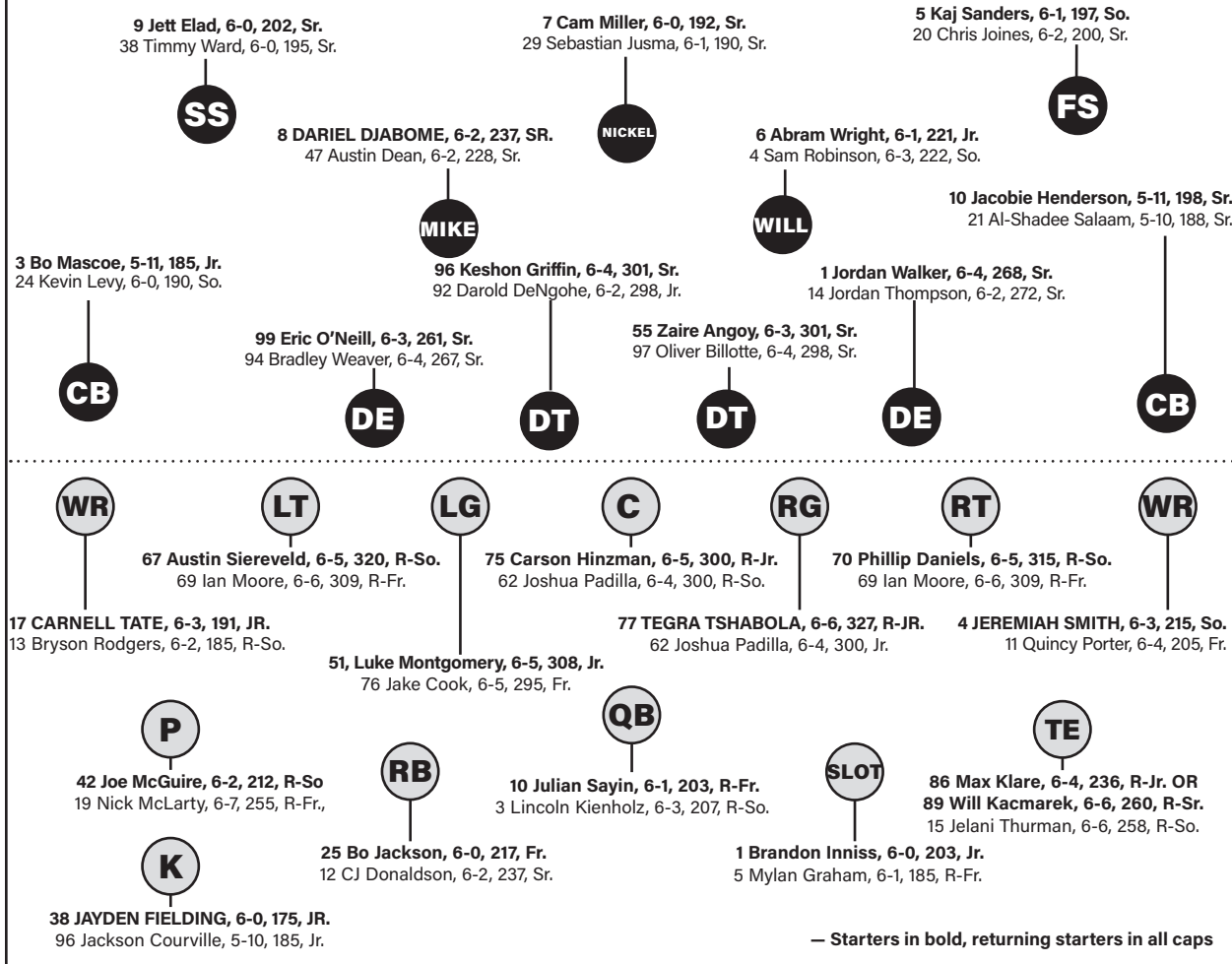
Rutgers at Ohio State

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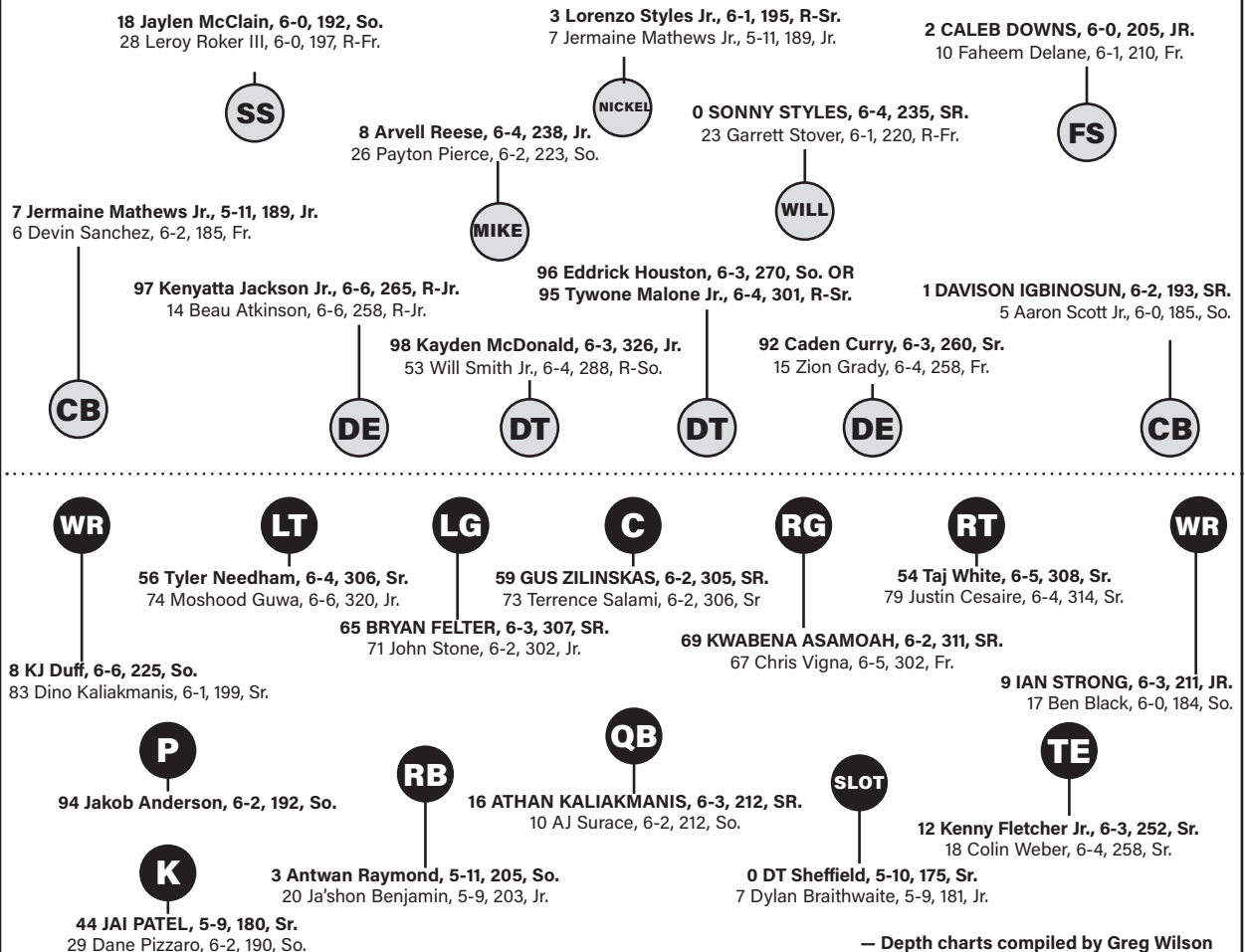


Projected Depth Charts

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



WHEN RUTGERS HAS THE BALL...



How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. RUTGERS RUSH DEFENSE

Ohio State can run the football, but it should remain a luxury, not a necessity. Imagine if the coaches adopted a run-first philosophy. The last time that happened was the last time OSU lost. Nonetheless, the Buckeyes ran for 222 yards on a 6.7 average and four scores against UCLA, led by Bo Jackson's 112 yards (7.5 per carry) and one touchdown. He had a 32-yard run, and Isaiah West added a 38-yarder among his 61 yards (7.6) and a TD. James Peoples hurdled his way with a spectacular 19-yard touchdown. Rutgers, under former Ohio State associate head coach/defensive coordinator Greg Schiano (2016-18), has the Scarlet Knights to 5-5 (2-5 Big Ten) and desperately needs one more win to be bowl eligible. They haven't played since a 35-20 victory vs. Maryland on Nov. 8. Rutgers allows 196.5 yards rushing per game, which is 123rd of the 134 FBS schools. Opponents are gaining a hefty 6.6 yards per carry. Those numbers rocketed when Maryland ran for 305 yards on 29 carries (10.5 avg.) with quarterback Malik Washington going wild for 164 yards on just eight attempts (20.5), including a 73-yarder. Nolan Ray added a 53-yarder for a 15.4 average on five rushes for 77 yards. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

RUTGERS RUSH OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Scarlet Knights struggle in the ground game, ranking 86th with 143.1 yards a game (3.7 per rush). Despite that, Antwan Raymond is a threat, gaining exactly 1,000 yards (5.0) to go with 11 touchdowns and a long of 51. Against Maryland, he tied a program record with 41 carries for a career-high 240 yards and a touchdown. Ja'Shon Benjamin has 307 yards (5.0). UCLA gained only 68 yards (2.7) rushing vs. the Buckeyes, but that's with a caveat. Bruins dual-threat QB Nico Iamaleava, who leads the team in rushing, did not play. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. RUTGERS PASS DEFENSE

The Buckeyes were without injured star receiver Carnell Tate for a second straight game, and Jeremiah Smith played only the first half, making four catches for 40 yards. Brandon Inniss stepped up with a career-high six catches, good for 30 yards, and tight end Max Klare's five receptions went for 26 yards. Seven players had at least two catches. Julian Sayin, possibly hampered by an ankle sprain, was off his game. After opening 11 for 11 for 100 yards, he finished 23 of 31 for 184 yards and a TD. Rutgers concedes 229.0 yards per game to rank 83rd. Maryland gained just 98 yards passing, but of course, most of the damage was on the ground. The Scarlet Knights have 10 sacks, which averages out to one a game. Eric O'Neill and Bradley Weaver have 2½ each. O'Neill also leads with 7½ tackles for loss. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

RUTGERS PASS OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Athan Kaliakmanis had a big game against Maryland, tying his career best with four touchdown passes, including 45-, 5- and 14-yards to wide receiver Ian Strong. Kaliakmanis has thrown for 2,705 yards and 17 touchdowns, with seven interceptions. He's completed 62.3 percent while averaging 270.5 yards a game. Rutgers has allowed 31 sacks for 172 yards. KJ Duff is the leading receiver. He has 53 catches for 923 yards (17.4) with a long of 72. Strong's 48 receptions have gone for 716 yards (14.9) and five scores. With Iamaleava out, UCLA's Luke Duncan made his first career start and had a rude introduction. He had 21 yards through two quarters, but he tossed a 51-yarder and an 18-yard TD in the third quarter and for the game was 16 of 23 for 154 yards. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

SPECIAL TEAMS

Lorenzo Styles Jr.'s 100-yard kickoff return was the first for the Buckeyes in 15 years. Caden Curry had a blocked punt, sort of, when the ball happened to hit him. Rutgers' Jai Patel has made 12 of 17 field goals. His long is 51 on the lone try from 50 and beyond. Punter Jakob Anderson averages 43.5 yards. The Scarlet Knights have blocked three punts, all for touchdowns. **EDGE: EVEN**

INTANGIBLES

Rutgers should not present a problem, but Schiano loves gadget plays, and why not? The Buckeyes' biggest opponent will be complacency. Another week, another mismatch. How well prepared are they for a real test? **EDGE: EVEN**

STAFF PREDICTION

Being the final home game should be enough incentive to energize what could be a sleepy noon crowd. The goal will be to get out of it injury-free. **OHIO STATE 42, RUTGERS 7**

Mathews Provides Spark On Buckeye Defense

By **SAM CIPRIANI**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Whether Jermaine Mathews Jr. is rallying teammates or igniting energy with a play, his voice and unwavering intensity reverberate across the Buckeye secondary.

In his breakout campaign this season, Mathews has emerged as a major contributor and shutdown cornerback on the nation's No. 1 defense, using his voice and relentless competitiveness to fuel a season that's seen the junior play both inside and outside.

As he's grown more comfortable in his role at Ohio State, Mathews has embraced being a vocal leader on the field, something he said doesn't always come naturally to every Buckeye.

"A lot of guys we have, they're great football players, but they don't talk as much, they're not very vocal," Mathews said. "I think I'm making up for that or just giving everybody confidence to know that we're the best. So we are going to go out there and trust in each other and know that everybody's going to do their job."

That steady rise in confidence has been years in the making.

A product of Winton Woods High School in Cincinnati, Mathews committed to Ohio State as the No. 47 overall player and the No. 5 cornerback, and he was the top player in Ohio in the 2023 class.

In his freshman season at Ohio State, Mathews wasn't yet the star he's become today, but he showed flashes of promise throughout the season as a reserve behind starting cornerback Denzel Burke. Mathews totaled 13 tackles (nine solo), had three pass breakups and took his only interception back 58 yards to the house against Western Kentucky.

Mathews' most impressive performance came in one of Ohio State's most important games of the season. In the No. 3 Buckeyes' 20-12 win over No. 7 Penn State, Mathews had what was a career-high three tackles and a pass breakup in relief of the injured Burke, spurring former defensive coordinator Jim Knowles to praise the young cornerback after the game.

"The kid has moxie," Knowles said. "I don't think he knew how big a moment it was, and that's not a bad thing. He just went out and played, made some tackles, didn't flinch at the moment of truth. I'm really proud of him. He's a good player."

It wasn't just Knowles who saw the potential in Mathews.

During the offseason between 2023 and 2024, head coach Ryan Day made it clear he had complete belief in Mathews, citing his competitive spirit and natural ability as the basis of that trust early on, while adding that Mathews needed to improve upon his discipline and the foundation of his early skills.

"He has quickness and he has twitch and he's competitive," Day said. "That's a guy who has a lot of talent. He has to continue to build discipline in his life – very important – and he can be a contributor. You see the talent there, and he has to have a good preseason for us, but the talent is

definitely there."

In Mathews' sophomore campaign, the 5-11, 190-pound cornerback did just that.

Mathews proved to be a spark plug for Ohio State's national championship team in 2024, playing behind Burke and rotating in at times with Burke struggling at points.

The sophomore saw time in each of the Buckeyes' 16 contests on the way to a national title, once again setting personal milestones in tackles (22, 14 solo), tackles for loss (2½) and sacks (one).

However, in following the national championship, the Buckeyes faced changes in the secondary, with Burke and Jordan Hancock entering the NFL draft.

Knowles left to take the same position at rival Penn State. Two weeks after Knowles' departure for the Nittany Lions, Ohio State hired former Detroit Lions head coach and longtime New England Patriots defensive coordinator Matt Patricia to replace him as the Buckeyes' defensive play-caller.

Just before Ohio State's spring game in mid-April, Mathews noted where he wanted to sharpen his game heading into the fall and how he was getting more comfortable in Patricia's new defensive system.

"(I've improved) my technique, the fundamentals of the game, and I've gone back to square one, making sure my foundation is right when we get to August," Mathews said in April. "We also have a new defense, so we are learning the scheme and getting the scheme down as well. I really like this scheme and how Patricia is engaged with the guys, and his impact on us has shown."

Now a full-time starter, Mathews has been able to improve upon an already solid season. In Patricia's new defensive scheme, the junior cornerback has showcased his versatility, playing in multiple spots on Ohio State's defense.

Mathews was tested early in the season, and he responded in emphatic fashion. In one of the most anticipated Week 1 games ever, Mathews and Ohio State made a statement to the entire nation in their 14-7 victory over No. 1 Texas.

The junior recorded three tackles and, most notably, had a third-quarter interception of Longhorn quarterback Arch Manning that led to the game-clinching touchdown pass from quarterback Julian Sayin to wide receiver Carnell Tate on the following Buckeye drive. Following the win, Mathews was named one of Ohio State's players of the game.

Tate, who caught the 40-yard bomb that ultimately sealed Ohio State's win, said Mathews had welcomed an increased role as a starter and that he has always been ready for the moment.

"I'm very excited for Jermaine," Tate said. "He's embraced a bigger role, and he's ready for it. He's put in so much work, and then for him to go out there and make those plays, it meant a lot, and I'm just proud of him."

Before Ohio State's Week 4 matchup with Washington, Mathews reflected on his past two years, stating he's grateful to see his hard work paying off and that he's learned to embrace the process.

"This was a tough last two years for

me," Mathews said. "It's important to keep the right mindset and know that you came here for a reason, you did this for a reason and bought into the process, so you can just enjoy it. I enjoy every second of it."

In 2025, Patricia has also used Mathews as a blitzer when Mathews slides inside, allowing the cornerback to rush the passer on the line of scrimmage – a new dimension of his game that the junior has been thrilled to showcase.

Mathews said it always puts a smile on his face when Patricia calls for a cornerback blitz, stating that he has to dampen his excitement to make sure he doesn't tip his blitzes.

"It comes (from) being a savvy football player," said Mathews of being able to execute the corner blitz. "You have to know where you're supposed to be and not show it too early. You don't want to tip your blitz and things like that. You have to understand the game, and I think Coach Patricia has been a great help in that. The whole defense, everybody's learning a lot of ball."

In addition to his skills in rushing the passer and dropping back in coverage, Mathews has also shown the capacity to play both outside and slot cornerback.

After nickel back Lorenzo Styles Jr. went down with an injury in Ohio State's 42-3 win over Minnesota on Oct. 4, the graduate cornerback missed the Buckeyes' next two contests against Illinois and Wisconsin.

Patricia shifted Mathews inside to the slot and placed freshman corner Devin Sanchez at the perimeter, putting the junior in a role he'd never taken on in live game action before this season.

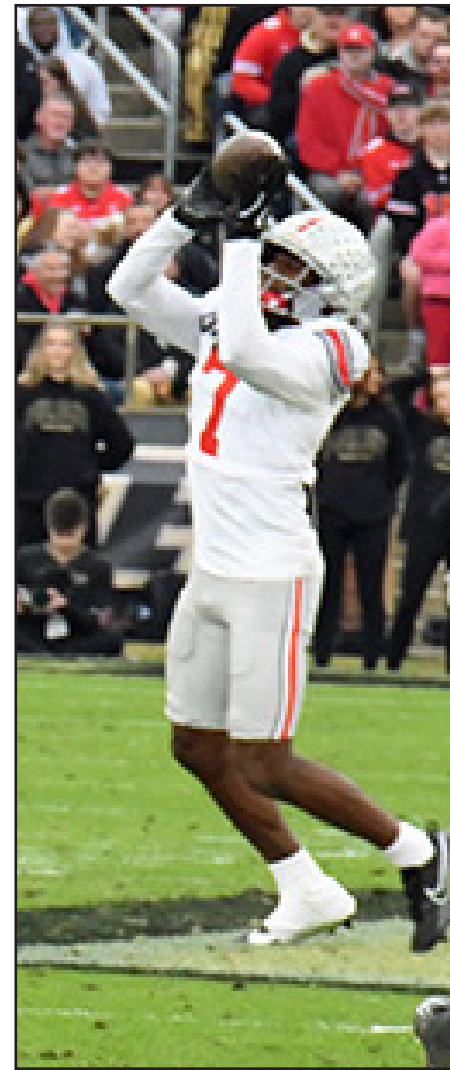
Mathews shone in his first start as the nickel and was all over the field in Ohio State's 34-16 win at Illinois. In the first quarter, Mathews deflected a pass from Illini quarterback Luke Altmyer, allowing Ohio State linebacker Payton Pierce to bring in the interception. Then, in the third quarter, he strip-sacked Altmyer, setting up defensive end Caden Curry to recover the fumble. Both drives led to Ohio State touchdowns.

Mathews' impact on the game didn't go unnoticed by the coaching staff. In his postgame press conference, Day highlighted how the junior's preparation allowed him to excel in an unfamiliar role.

"For Jermaine to move inside the way he did says a lot about his preparation. It's one thing to go through a walk-through," Day said. "It's another thing to go through practice. When you are now a nickel and you now have to fit the run, you have to hit the blitzes, the coverage, everything happens a little bit faster when you get closer to the ball."

"For him to be able to do that and play the way he did says a lot about his preparation, but also give credit to (cornerbacks coach) Tim Walton and the work that they did during the week. That was well done. Depth is going to get challenged. When you have multiple guys that can play multiple positions, that's creating depth. That was a good sign from Jermaine."

Through 10 games in 2025, Mathews was on pace to smash his career highs in almost every statistical category, racking



FILE PHOTO

TURNING A CORNER — Jermaine Mathews Jr. has developed into a reliable cornerback in a career that started slowly. The junior has also become a vocal leader on the best defense in the country.

up 17 tackles (12 solo), 1½ tackles for loss, three pass breakups, one sack and one forced fumble.

He added his second interception of the season in Ohio State's 34-10 win over Purdue on Nov. 8 on a deflected pass by safety Caleb Downs, taking it back 23 yards.

Believing his versatility is what separates him from most defensive backs, Mathews said he feels comfortable playing both outside and in the slot, despite the positional differences.

"I think I'm a complete corner," Mathews said. "I think I can do whatever you ask me to do in the back end. I can play all the positions in the back end, to be honest with you. I bring that energy, and I think that I'm a complete corner."

Mathews makes it a point to set the tone off the field, fostering a positive culture for Ohio State in the locker room. Mathews' presence goes far beyond the field. The cornerback has played a crucial role as one of the leaders of the Buckeyes, Patricia said.

"You feel Jermaine every time you step on the field or in the meeting room," Patricia said. "He's a great young man. He's got unbelievable energy about him."

George Carries Buckeyes Past Golden Gophers

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is 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 49-21 win over Minnesota on Nov. 4, 1995.

By MARCUS HARTMAN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State's ninth game of the 1995 season was unique for a multitude of reasons. It was played at night, inside and on artificial turf.

The Buckeyes also ended up playing most of the game without one of their breakout stars on offense, but that only served to bolster Eddie George's Heisman Trophy campaign and set the stage for something even bigger.

George To The Rescue

Coach John Cooper's Buckeyes traveled to Minnesota with an opportunity to start the season 9-0 for the first time since 1979.

The Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome in Minneapolis served as the site for a relatively rare Big Ten night game, a unique setting for an Ohio State team coming off consecutive wins at home in the elements over Purdue and Iowa on the Prescription Athletic Turf of Ohio Stadium.

The Metrodome turf provided a fast track for the Ohio State offensive machine, but it soon robbed the Buckeyes of one of their key cogs.

Terry Glenn entered the night looking to break Cris Carter's record for receiving yards in a season at Ohio State. He did that with Carter, a member of the Minnesota Vikings, in attendance, but it came at a cost.

The OSU junior's tendency for acrobatic catches giveth and taketh as he went high in the air to pull down a 45-yard catch from Bobby Hoying then bounced hard off the turf. That left him with a slight shoulder separation and ended his night with three catches for 103 yards in the game and 1,151 for the season.

Into the void stepped George.

Ohio State's burly, bruising tailback not only ran for 178 yards and three touchdowns in the 49-21 Buckeye victory but also caught eight passes for 86 yards in front of 46,418 fans.

Start Slow, Finish Fast

Despite not having top running back Chris Dawkins because of an ankle injury and losing starting quarterback Corey Sauter to a knee injury in the first half, the Golden Gophers controlled the game early against the Buckeyes.

Jason Murdock replaced Sauter and threw a 10-yard touchdown pass to Tutu Atwell to put the Gophers on top 14-7 late in the first quarter, but the Buckeyes scored the next 42 points.

Hoying started the scoring blitz with a 9-yard touchdown run. Then George scored from 11 yards out before his backup, Pepe Pearson, got in on the act with an 18-yard touchdown run.

Hoying hit tight end Rickey Dudley for a 9-yard touchdown pass with 44 seconds left in the second quarter to stake the Buckeyes

to a 35-14 halftime lead, and they tacked on two more touchdowns in the third to put the game away.

George supplied both of those, first breaking away for a career-long 87-yard touchdown jaunt then scoring from a yard out.

"The play was designed to go left, but there were three defenders out there," George said of the 87-yarder, which was the third longest in Ohio State history at the time. "I just cut it back underneath and put my head down, trying to do what I could, and it was wide open."

Minnesota added a garbage-time touchdown to set the final score, but that was far too little too late for coach Jim Wacker's team.

"They whupped us as bad as anyone can whup you," said Wacker, who lamented the world would not get to see Ohio State face No. 1 Nebraska at the end of the season because of the Rose Bowl not being part of the Bowl Alliance.

Hoying ended the day 16-for-24 passing for 287 yards with two touchdowns and no interceptions while backups Stanley Jackson and Tom Hoying (Bob's brother) both saw action, too.

Pearson added 71 yards rushing to George's efforts, and Ohio State ultimately outgained the Golden Gophers 590-370.

"They were not stopping us," Cooper said. "I felt like it was a matter of time before we got them stopped."

Ohio State junior nose tackle Luke Fickell said the defense had to work out a few things before clamping down.

"They were smoking at the beginning, and we had some miscommunication," Fickell said.

Just Keep Winning

Despite its perfect record, Ohio State had not secured anything to that point in the season.

The Buckeyes moved up to No. 2 in the nation thanks to Florida State losing to No. 24 Virginia on the previous Thursday night, but that would not put them in position to face the powerful Cornhuskers on New Year's Day because the Big Ten, as mentioned, was not part of the Bowl Alliance that agreed to pit the top two teams in the country against each other if possible in a bowl game.

The Big Ten's champion would still go to the Rose Bowl regardless, and that was still up for grabs thanks to a surprising Northwestern victory. The sixth-ranked Wildcats improved to 8-1 overall and 6-0 in the Big Ten by beating No. 12 Penn State 21-10 the day Ohio State topped Minnesota. That matched their most wins since 1948, which was also the only season they made the Rose Bowl.

On the bright side for the Buckeyes, Ohio State would get the tiebreaker for the Rose Bowl if they both ended up 8-0 in conference play because the Wildcats lost to Miami (Ohio) in Week 2 after opening the season with a shocking win over Notre Dame.

Michigan went into the weekend No. 7 but was upset by rival Michigan State 28-25. MSU's Tony Banks threw for 318 yards and crippled the Wolverines' hopes of winning the Big Ten by handing them their second conference loss of the season, despite Tim Biakabutika running for 191 yards for the Maize and Blue.

"We figure we've got to win out," Cooper

said. "That's the way I approach it. It would be nice to get some help from somebody else. We've got three games left. We have to take care of business."

Moving Up The List

George passed Carlos Snow to move into fourth in career rushing yards at Ohio State.

His 3,119 yards trailed No. 3 Keith Byars by 89, but that left him well within striking distance when the Buckeyes played host to Illinois at Ohio Stadium the following week.

With three regular-season games remaining – Illinois and Indiana at home, Michigan on the road – he had already put together a noteworthy season and career.

Not bad for someone who told reporters in the week before the Minnesota game that he was "a lazy kid."

"I wouldn't do anything all day except be a couch potato, watch TV and eat sweets," George recalled of growing up in Philadel-

phia.

Perhaps that was the inspiration for his mother to ship him off to military school in Virginia, a decision that proved to be wise.

"My first year at Fork Union, I would try to get out of stuff," George recalled. "I was content with my position, but when it came down to crunch time my senior year, I had to focus on what I wanted to do, where I wanted to go. I guess a lot of people had negative stuff to say about me, stuff like 'Oh, you'll never play at a Division I school, you're too slow.'"

"That was my fuel."

By his senior year at Ohio State, Cooper was describing George as one of the hardest workers on his team.

"In the summer, the players ran every day at 12:30," Cooper said. "He'd come back and run at 6 p.m., too. We have to chase him out of there."

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Buckeyes Land Versatile 2026 Commitment

Ohio State continues to add to its 2026 recruiting class, now with a former Tennessee commit – North Forney, Texas, four-star athlete Legend Bey (5-11, 175) – flipping to Ohio State on Nov. 10.

RECRUITING
OUTLOOK
Greg Wilson

Bey is a quarterback at his high school but will be used as a running back by the Buckeyes when he gets on campus. He also has the ability to move into the slot and could return kicks as well with his 10.23-second 100-meter track speed.

He is considered the No. 361 player in the country, the No. 24 athlete and the No. 47 player in the state of Texas.

However, some recruiting analysts don't believe that his ranking reflects the potential impact he could have on the Buckeyes when he arrives on campus.

"The most explosive player in the Lone Star State commits to Ohio State," said On3 national recruiting analyst Steve Wiltfong. "Think of a modern-day Curtis Samuel. He can play running back, receiver, slot or return game. He's an absolute weapon."

"This is a huge flip from Tennessee. The Vols sent (head coach) Josh Heupel down (to Texas) to try to keep him in the class. Texas extended a late offer. But it's Ohio State, lead recruiter Carlos Locklyn and Ryan Day adding Legend Bey to their recruiting class."

The Buckeyes missed on Bey when he originally committed to the Volunteers in June, although they were one of his top schools at the time, along with Duke, Texas A&M and West Virginia. But Ohio State was able to ultimately land him months later.

In the 2025 season, Bey has passed for 1,138 yards, 14 touchdowns and two inter-

ceptions while rushing for 1,356 yards and 23 touchdowns in just nine games.

Buckeyes Add Weekend Commits

Ohio State recruiting has been on a heater in the month of November, and that continued over the weekend of its 48-10 win over UCLA.

On Nov. 15, the Buckeyes got a commitment from Cibolo (Texas) Steele four-star safety Eli Johnson (6-3, 200) a few hours before the win. Then, on the morning of Nov. 16, they got a commitment from Buford, Ga., four-star defensive end Dre Quinn (6-4, 228).

Quinn had been committed to Clemson until the Tigers' poor start to the season, and on his visit to Columbus for the win over the Bruins, he decided that he wanted to be at Ohio State.

A 2026 prospect, Quinn is rated the No. 391 player in the country, the No. 36 edge rusher and the No. 43 player in the state of Georgia. He is the sixth defensive lineman in the class, joining the previously most recent flip, Bessemer (Ala.) City four-star defensive lineman Emanuel Ruffin (6-4, 295), who flipped to OSU from Colorado a week before Quinn did.

Johnson becomes the second highest-rated player in the Buckeyes' 2027 class as the No. 114 player in the country, the No. 10 safety and the No. 15 player in the state of Texas.

He is the sixth commitment in the class and the third of the month after Liberty Center, Ohio, four-star interior offensive lineman Kellen Wymer (6-5, 265) and St. Clairsville, Ohio, three-star interior lineman Mason Wilt (6-5, 295) both committed on Nov. 2.

It's still early in the cycle, but Ohio State's 2027 class ranks No. 3 overall according to 247Sports, while the 2026 class is still at No. 7 in the country after Quinn's commitment.

Day Looks For Versatile Prepsters

The day after Bey's commitment, Day was asked about positional versatility when it comes to recruiting and how much of a factor it can be when taking a look at high school players.

He said that it's a major factor these days, given the way college football is going with shrinking rosters.

"Not to give away trade secrets, but nowadays, if you're a one-position-only guy, you better be elite," Day said. "If you're an offensive lineman that can play guard and tackle, if you're a receiver that can block and run, if you're a linebacker that can play on the edge, a nickel that can play corner, a safety that can play down, all of those things come into play."

"The versatility is important because every year we know this roster is getting shorter and shorter. We're going to get to just over 100 people on that team, so that means everyone has to be versatile. That means guys who are on the field and also scout-team guys."

When Day says that, it definitely seems like he means it. You need look no further

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
Legend Bey	ATH	5-11	175	★★★★	North Forney, Texas	
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	
Dre Quinn	DL	6-4	228	★★★★	Buford, Ga	
Jaeden Ricketts	WR	6-0	187	★★★★	Pataskala (Ohio) Watkins Memorial	
Maxwell Riley	OT	6-5	280	★★★★	Avon Lake, Ohio	
Emanuel Ruffin	DL	6-4	295	★★★★	Bessemer (Ala.) City	
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	
Jordan Thomas	CB	6-1	185	★★★★	Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic	
Jay Timmons	CB	5-11	185	★★★★	Gibsonia (Pa.) Pine-Richland	
Khary Wilder	DE	6-4	260	★★★★	Gardena (Calif.) Junipero Serra	
Mason Wilhelm	OL	6-4	285	★★★	Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward	

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.	
Eli Johnson	S	6-3	200	★★★★	Cibolo (Texas) Steele	
Angelo Smith	S	5-10	170	★★★	Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna	
Mason Wilt	OT	6-5	265	★★★	St. Clairsville, Ohio	
Kellen Wymer	OT	6-5	265	★★★★	Liberty Center, Ohio	

OSU Football 2028 Commitments						
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	

than the roster this season and how so many players are being used in games.

Some of the top players on the team are not being used as single-position players, and that, in many cases, is what is making them so valuable. Both linebacker Arvell Reese and safety Caleb Downs have been extremely versatile players this year. Reese has been able to move sideline to sideline and play as a traditional linebacker, but he can also play both on the edge and the interior of the defensive line to rush the passer, and he has two pass breakups in coverage as well.

On the offensive side of the ball, left tackle Austin Siereveld had never played the position before this spring, getting time at both guard spots last year when called upon. But now there is an argument to be made that he has been the best of the five starters on the line.

Day didn't bring up current players as examples but looked back on former Ohio State players who were used in many different roles.

"Guys like Xavier Johnson, think about how many roles he's played, or a guy like

Mitch Rossi. Those guys, they became very important in those seasons because they could do multiple things. The more guys like that we can have in the program, the better off we're going to be.

"Anybody that we're bringing into the program, we want them to have some versatility," Day said. "I think you can see by some of the guys we're adding to the roster here over the last month, they can do multiple things."

Waiting For Flips An OSU Strategy

Ohio State has been on a hot streak when it comes to recruiting in the month of November.

The first hint that it could be flip season for the Buckeyes came on Oct. 14, when Baltimore St. Frances Academy three-star safety KhMari Bing (6-0, 190) committed to OSU after decommitting from Maryland just eight days earlier.

But since Gibsonia (Pa.) Pine-Richland four-star cornerback Jay Timmons (5-11, 185) flipped from Florida State on Nov. 6, the ball has continued to roll for the Buck-



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ASK AN ANALYST

with Marc Givler of Buckeye Huddle

Ohio State flipped North Forney, Texas, four-star athlete Legend Bey (5-11, 175) from Tennessee on Nov. 10. What do you make of Bey as a prospect, and how do you believe the Buckeyes will use him?

"It's interesting because Bey can do so many different things. He can play quarterback, he can play receiver and play running back. In recent years, I would say probably since Ryan Day took over, the Buckeyes haven't recruited a ton of guys like him. This feels more like an Urban Meyer throwback to a Curtis Samuel type of guy. I think he's probably going to get a first look at running back and maybe have an opportunity to play some wide receiver, but clearly they love his speed. He's a solidly built kid, so he can run with not just speed, but some toughness as well, and he's just a very versatile offensive weapon. I think they just see someone who can do a lot of things with the ball in his hands, and they'll figure it out later, that type of thing. They have kind of been poking around for a second running back in the class, so this might fit the bill, and check a few different boxes with what he can do."

The Buckeyes were also able to flip Bessemer City, Ala., four-star defensive lineman Emanuel Ruffin (6-4, 295) from Colorado on Nov. 9 and now have five defensive linemen in the 2026 class. What do you make of the group that Larry Johnson has been able to recruit?

"They've got a lot of good players there. They clearly need to add at least one more defensive end, which they're obviously working on right now, but they've got four defensive tackles, and Ruffin is a really interesting player. He's almost 300 pounds al-

ready, but if you watch his tape, he's pretty explosive as well. So he's really a guy who I think, physically, could potentially get into the rotation fairly early in his career, because he's not a guy who needs to bulk up, but he's also not a guy who needs to drop 20 pounds. He's at a good playing weight right now, but he's a powerful kid.

"Richland (N.J.) St. Augustine Prep four-star defensive lineman Damari Simeon (6-3, 275) is a tremendous player as well. Then you get guys like Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy three-star defensive lineman Cameron Brickle (6-2, 305) and Cleveland Glenville three-star defensive lineman Jamir Perez (6-4, 360), who are bigger one-tech bodies, and I think they are high upside guys, especially Jamir Perez, the way he can move at his size. He's got to drop some weight when he gets here. They've got some really good players at the top, and then they've got some high-upside guys as well in there. So they've really addressed their future at defensive tackle. Then, Gardena (Calif.) Junipero Serra four-star edge rusher Khary Wilder (6-4, 260) is an absolute stud on the outside. They just need at least one more to go with him."

Gibsonia (Pa.) Pine-Richland four-star cornerback Jay Timmons (5-11, 185) adds to Ohio State's 2026 cornerbacks after flipping from Florida State. Have you been able to see him play? What do you make of him as a prospect?

"I haven't seen him in person yet. I've had a chance to watch and go over his film and ask some people in the area about him. He's just a gamer. He's solid in terms of his build. He's not 6-2 like Devin Sanchez, but he's got decent height to him. What I

found a little bit fascinating about him is that his dad (11-year NFL veteran Lawrence Timmons) is a Florida State legend. So the fact that they were able to flip him from Florida State says a lot about the reputation Ohio State has right now, especially on defense, with what they're doing this year and in recent years.

"He's a very versatile defensive back, and I think he could play outside if they need him to. He could also play the nickel if they needed him to. So that was a big pickup they needed. They needed another corner in this class, and I think he's a really good player, and the best thing I can say about him is he's gotten a lot better late in his high school career. Sometimes the guys who do that tend to work out better at the college level, those guys who kind of shoot up the rankings late in their career and don't seem to be kind of topped out or maxed out, if you will. He's really improved, and again, he can do it all. He can cover; he can hit."

Are there any other flips you believe the Buckeyes will be able to pull off before the early signing period?

"They're trying, I don't know if there's a specific guy. I mean, they kind of flipped all the guys who we're talking about here. They would still take Harrisburg, Pa., four-star offensive tackle Kevin Brown (6-5, 270) if he wanted in, the Penn State offensive lineman. But that one doesn't particularly seem to be trending their way right now. That feels to me like a kid who could end up at West Virginia or is a kid who wants to see what Penn State's going to do and could absolutely end up back at Penn State if they make an intriguing hire."

eyes. On Nov. 7, Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward three-star interior offensive lineman Mason Wilhelm (6-4, 285) flipped from North Carolina. On Nov. 9, Bessemer (Ala.) City four-star defensive lineman Emanuel Ruffin (6-4, 295) committed to Ohio State after backing off his Colorado pledge. Then on Nov. 10, Bey flipped from Tennessee.

Day had been saying for months that the coaches were confident that they would finish the 2026 recruiting cycle strong, and now that his prediction is coming to fruition, he said that waiting this long to fill out the class was a purposeful approach.

"It's a little bit of a philosophy. Not that we're not trying to get good players, but a couple of things come into play," Day said. "One, there's going to be changes in college football year in and year out. The second part of it is the evaluation their senior year. When you take those two things into consideration, the projection last spring was that we were going to be in a lot different place in November and December than we were in June. I think the biggest part is that we have more information about the players."

He added that the new landscape of college football has a major effect on the recruiting approach. Now that revenue sharing is allowed at the NCAA level, there are dollar signs involved when it comes to recruiting conversations.

Day said that now that the prep players are going to be paid by Ohio State when they join the program, he and his fellow coaches have even more reason to be as diligent as possible when it comes to the recruiting process.

That has made them wait a little longer on some players so that they can do some

extra evaluation when those prospects get on the field during their senior seasons.

"The amount of resources we're investing in these young men nowadays, you better be right," Day said. "In the past, you could bring in whoever you wanted. Maybe they were ranked highly, or whatever. If they didn't work out or they didn't play, maybe it takes three or four years to get on the field or maybe they try another school.

"You can't have bad investments anymore. These are critical decisions, so we want to make sure that we're turning over every stone and making sure that we're right in our decisions. Not that it's 100 percent, but we have to do our due diligence to make sure that when we evaluate these guys, we have all the information that we possibly can to do what's right."

Another recent change in the game that had an effect on their approach is the change to the transfer portal.

The NCAA voted to shrink the portal to one window, taking away the post-spring portal and implementing a single window open in mid-January. That window will be open during the last couple of rounds of the College Football Playoff, making it difficult for teams that are still in the bracket to recruit transfers.

But as Ohio State has done since players have been allowed to transfer with no penalty, Day still wants to make sure the Buckeyes fill out their roster with high school players that they develop, while plugging in at positions through the portal when necessary.

"We want to make sure that we're continually recruiting high school players that we can develop," Day said. "Based on how far we go this season, that will adjust how

we end up getting to our number at the end of the year, but we want to make sure that we're flush at all areas."

OSU Hosts Large Group Of Recruits

The Buckeyes had prospects from many different recruiting classes on campus for the 48-10 win over UCLA on Nov. 15.

As they try to finish off their 2026 recruiting class before the early signing period at the beginning of December, the Buckeyes had a few prospects on campus in hopes that they could earn late commitments.

The prospects on campus from that class were Winter Garden (Fla.) Windermere four-star cornerback and Florida commit CJ Bronaugh (6-1, 166); Pickerington (Ohio) Central three-star safety RJ Holland (6-2, 175); Lafayette (La.) Acadiana three-star defensive lineman Darryus McKinley (6-3, 270); Buford, Ga., four-star defensive end Dre Quinn (6-4, 228); and Hoschton (Ga.) Mill Creek three-star linebacker and Wake Forest commit Braxton Rembert (6-5, 200).

The 2026 Ohio State commits who were on hand were Cleveland Glenville four-star linebacker Cincere Johnson (6-3, 225) and Wilhelm.

From the 2027 class, the Buckeyes had Huntington Beach, Calif., four-star quarterback Brady Edmunds (6-5, 220); St. Clairsville, Ohio, three-star interior offensive lineman Mason Wilt (6-5, 295); and Liberty Center, Ohio, four-star interior offensive lineman Kellen Wymer (6-5, 265) back on campus.

The 2027 recruits who aren't committed to Ohio State who were in Columbus were Washington Court House (Ohio) Miami Trace running back Julian Baker (6-0,

200); Shakopee, Minn., three-star linebacker Blake Betton (6-2, 200); West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West athlete Chris Bradley (5-10, 160); Chandler (Ariz.) Basha four-star offensive tackle Jake Hildebrand (6-6, 285); Pittsburgh Imani Christian Academy four-star safety Gabe Jenkins (6-0, 187); Cibolo (Texas) Steele four-star safety Eli Johnson (6-3, 200); Garner, N.C., safety Arosen Randle Jr. (6-3, 210); Germantown, Wis., four-star offensive tackle Cole Reiter (6-7, 295); Englewood (Colo.) Cherry Creek four-star interior offensive lineman Jackson Roper (6-5, 285); Chillicothe, Ohio, offensive tackle Conner Rutherford (6-6, 280); Exton (Pa.) Downingtown East four-star defensive end Abraham Sesay (6-5, 215); Libertyville, Ill., four-star tight end Brock Williams (6-5, 210); Atlanta Woodward Academy cornerback Bryce Woods (6-2, 175); and Kalamazoo (Mich.) Central four-star offensive tackle Dewey Young (6-5, 285).

The Buckeyes have also begun hosting more visitors from the 2028 class, as well, with Carmel, Ind., safety Drake Coellner (6-0, 190); Chillicothe, Ohio, athlete Cartae Ligon (6-0, 180); Malvern (Pa.) Prep four-star defensive end George Parkinson IV (6-4, 228); Pflugerville (Texas) Weiss defensive end Reagan Smith (6-3, 210); Baltimore St. Frances Academy four-star athlete Jermaine Smith Jr. (6-5, 215); and Franklin (Tenn.) Battle Ground Academy four-star defensive lineman Ayden Woodruff (6-5, 184) all making it to campus.

From the 2029 class, only two high school freshmen made the trip to Columbus. Pickerington (Ohio) Central running back Edmund McAllister (5-8, 175) and

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Ohio State Makes Lists For Three O-Linemen

Continued From Page 23

Philadelphia Roman Catholic safety Coron Russell Jr. (6-2, 185) were both there for the OSU win.

Ohio State A Top Choice For Recruits

As is usually the case, the Buckeyes were included on six prospect lists that were narrowed down since BSB last went to press.

One of those recruits who included Ohio State in his top 10 was Douglasville (Ga.) Douglas County four-star offensive tackle Joshua Sam-Epelle (6-9, 340). One of the largest prospects in the 2027 class, Sam-Epelle is ranked No. 69 in the country, the No. 8 offensive tackle and the No. 7 player in Georgia.

He also included Alabama, Georgia Tech, Georgia, Miami, Nebraska, Ole Miss, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas A&M on his list.

The Buckeyes were inside the top five for Ramsey (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep three-star tight end JT Geraci (6-5, 230). He included them along with Alabama, Notre Dame, Texas and Vanderbilt. Geraci is considered the No. 518 player in the 2027 class, the No. 27 tight end and the No. 14 player in the state of New Jersey.

San Antonio Roosevelt four-star offensive tackle Kaeden Scott (6-7, 285) nar-

rowed his scholarships down to 10 schools. He has Ohio State inside that top 10, along with Ole Miss, SMU, Stanford, TCU, Tennessee, Texas A&M, Texas Tech, Texas and UTSA.

Scott is the No. 184 player in the country in the 2027 class, the No. 20 offensive tackle and the No. 26 player in the talent-rich state of Texas.

Orlando (Fla.) The First Academy four-star interior offensive lineman Reed Ramsier (6-5, 305) was another player to narrow his list down. The five schools that stand out from the others for him are Alabama, Georgia, Miami, Ohio State and Texas. Ramsier is the No. 354 player in the 2027 class and the No. 18 interior lineman.

Cincinnati Anderson four-star cornerback Ace Alston (5-11, 175) narrowed his list down to 10 schools, which includes Indiana, LSU, Michigan, Missouri, Notre Dame, Ohio State, Oregon, Penn State, Tennessee and USC. He is the No. 115 player in the 2027 class and the No. 11 cornerback.

The last player to include the Buckeyes was Raleigh (N.C.) Millbrook four-star defensive end Rashad Streets (6-4, 230), who is down to 12 schools. Those 12 are Alabama, Clemson, Florida State, Georgia, Michigan, Nebraska, NC State, Ohio State, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. Streets is the No. 65

player in the 2027 class and the No. 8 edge rusher.

Buckeyes Make More Offers

Ohio State made more scholarship offers since BSB last went to press. Here's a look at the players who received an offer from the Buckeyes.

• **Venice, Fla., four-star wide receiver Tyree Mannings (6-0, 170)** – Mannings is the No. 45 overall player in the 2028 class, the No. 8 wide receiver and the No. 11 player in Florida. He holds 17 Division I offers, which include Auburn, Florida, Georgia, LSU, Miami (Fla.), Nebraska, Ole Miss, Oregon and Texas A&M. Mannings transferred to Venice High School for his sophomore season after he caught 35 passes for 838 yards and seven touchdowns as a freshman at Sarasota (Fla.) Booker.

• **Euclid, Ohio, four-star cornerback Kei'Shjuan Telfair (6-0, 160)** – A 2027 recruit, Telfair is the No. 273 player in the class, the No. 30 corner and the No. 8 player in Ohio. He holds 31 Division I offers, with offers from the Buckeyes, Clemson and Notre Dame coming most recently.

• **Chatsworth (Calif.) Sierra Canyon four-star safety Myles Baker (6-1, 185)** – The No. 322 player in the country, the No. 32 safety and the No. 31 player in California, Baker has 23 Division I offers. That

offer list includes Alabama, Georgia, LSU, Michigan, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Texas A&M and USC. In 2024, he had 67 tackles, three for loss, one sack, an interception and a forced fumble.

• **Mustang, Okla., four-star cornerback Gabriel Osborne Jr. (6-2, 180)** – Osborne is the No. 144 player in the 2027 class and the No. 14 cornerback. He holds 17 Division I offers, which include LSU, Miami, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, Texas A&M and Texas Tech.

Other Notes And Tidbits

• The Buckeyes will no longer have a shot at flipping Dunlap, Ill., four-star tight end Mack Sutter (6-5, 230), who shut down his recruitment since BSB last went to press and has said that he will remain committed to Alabama.

• For what will be its last home game of the season that it would be able to host recruits, Ohio State will have Millville (Utah) Ridgeline four-star defensive end Krew Jones (6-5, 233) on campus for its game against Rutgers on Nov. 22. He is the No. 149 player in the 2027 class and the No. 19 edge rusher. He first received his offer from the Buckeyes on April 25 during spring practices.

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago — 1990

The Ohio State football recruiting trail had not gone through Youngstown, Ohio, recently, but 1990 was proving to be a different story.

Former defensive back Garcia Lane, a graduate of Youngstown South who played for the Buckeyes from 1981-83, and center Bob Maggs of Cardinal Mooney, a Buckeye lineman from 1983-86, were two of only a few Youngstown natives to make their mark at Ohio State in recent years.

There were just two Youngstown natives on the OSU roster in 1990 – defensive backs Mark Pelini and Bryan Cook.

But if the Ohio State coaching staff found success in the northeast Ohio city this recruiting season, a number of Youngstown natives could join the Ohio State football roster the next year.

Those whom the Buckeyes were courting included defensive back Deollo Anderson and defensive linemen Matt Emch and Jamar Fordham of Youngstown Ursuline, as well as quarterback John Ryan and linebacker Tony Knez of Boardman.

30 Years Ago — 1995

With close to half of Ohio State's 1996 recruiting class already locked up through verbal commitments, one would think the Buckeye coaches would sit back and enjoy working from a position of strength in the recruiting stretch drive.

Such was not the case, though.

Ohio State had official visits set with a number of top-rated players from Ohio and across the country.

One of three players who already visited – defensive end Clinton Wayne of Brampton (Ontario) Centennial – had committed to the Buckeyes. Defensive lineman Jason McCauley of Key West, Fla., visited the same weekend as Wayne did, Oct. 21, while OSU hosted Purdue. The Buckeyes welcomed Jerry Westbrook of Boca Raton (Fla.) Pope John Paul II for the Nov. 11 game against Illinois.

25 Years Ago — 2000

Ohio State welcomed a group of about 25 football prospects for its Nov. 4 home game with Michigan State.

Among those in attendance were verbal commitments Redgie Arden, Rodney Carter, Ryan Cook, Adam Olds, Brandon Schnitker, Jacob Stewart and Andre Tyree.

Perhaps the key prospect in attendance was Columbus Brookhaven running back Maurice Hall. Hall, ranked Ohio's fourth-best prospect by The Ohio Football Recruiting News, had enjoyed a monster senior season.

20 Years Ago — 2005

Some hearts around Ohio probably started racing when it was learned that Chris Wells, the Akron Garfield star and Ohio State's verbal commitment ranked the nation's No. 8 overall player by Rivals.com, was taking an official visit to USC the first weekend of November.

Well, everybody could take a deep breath and relax. Wells enjoyed his time spent in Southern California, but he wasn't about to make that his permanent home.

"It was nice," Wells told BSB of his visit while sitting in the airport waiting for his plane home. "It went pretty good."

But when asked if the visit gave him any second thoughts about his commitment, he had a simple response: "No."

15 Years Ago — 2010

Given a chance to follow tradition or stand out from the crowd, Conner Crowell chose the latter.

The senior middle linebacker from Waldorf (Md.) North Point had narrowed his list to local favorite Penn State and Ohio State, and as he tried to choose between the two schools, he reflected upon something OSU linebackers coach Luke Fickell had told him.

"I just wanted to be one of the first from Maryland to go to Ohio State," he told BSB. "I was just trying to start a new pipeline for Ohio State. Coach Fickell said that they needed somebody to be the first and to help them start recruiting this area more so that they can start getting better players. This is a Penn State-dominated area."

With that, the Buckeyes had their first 2011 verbal commitment in more than four months. A three-star prospect, Crowell was rated the No. 23 prospect at his position by Scout.com.

10 Years Ago — 2015

Ranked the No. 2 overall prospect and No. 1 defensive end, Nick Bosa had long been thought of as one of the most dynamic and impressive players in the class of 2016. With Joey Bosa likely gone after the 2015 season, he could be immediately replaced by his younger brother.

"He's the surest thing in high school football as far as this year's

Five Years Ago — 2020

According to a report from CBS Sports' Dennis Dodd, the NCAA Football Oversight Committee recommended the ongoing recruiting dead period be extended through April 15, 2021.

The NCAA Division I Council was set to approve the recommendation at its Nov. 18 meeting, which meant coaches would not meet in person with prospective recruits for more than a year.

The council first implemented the dead period in March due to the worldwide coronavirus outbreak but extended it through the end of the calendar year at its meeting in September.

As for how the news impacted Ohio State, both Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic five-star defensive end JT Tuimoloau and Steilacoom, Wash., five-star wide receiver Emeka Egbuka hoped to take official visits before making their respective college decisions. Now, Tuimoloau would be forced to make the biggest decision of his life without ever setting foot on campus. Egbuka, on the other hand, had been to Columbus twice, but not since he attended the Buckeyes' 38-7 win over Wisconsin in October 2019.

One Year Ago — 2024

One of Ohio State's top remaining targets in the 2025 class, Montgomery (Ala.) Carver four-star running back Anthony Rogers decommitted from Alabama on Nov. 17.

Rogers was on campus for Ohio State's 45-0 win over Purdue on Nov. 9 for an official visit after the Buckeyes had spent months trying to flip the four-star prospect.

He said that he would not commit to another school yet, but he did specify when he would, telling On3 that he will be choosing between Georgia and Ohio State on Dec. 4, when prospects would be signing with schools.

The back had been committed to the Crimson Tide since June of 2023 but had been exploring his options, taking multiple visits elsewhere while he was pledged there, including an unofficial visit to Columbus in May.

Sawyer Makes Impression In First NFL Season

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The moment went viral.

Former Ohio State linebacker Jack Sawyer, he of the legendary strip-sack and score against Texas in last year's national semifinal, made his first career interception late in the third quarter of the Pittsburgh Steelers' 27-20 win against the Indianapolis Colts on Nov. 2.

As his teammates surrounded him with back slaps and congratulations on the sideline, Steelers coach Mike Tomlin rushed over to the fourth-round pick (123rd) in the 2025 NFL draft.

Tomlin shook his hand vigorously and twice screamed, "That's why I go to Columbus, Ohio."

Indeed, Tomlin is a fan of the Buckeyes, at least of the NFL quality players they produce, with Sawyer and his CFP championship quarterback Will Howard, also from the 2025 draft, being the latest.

Defensive tackle Cameron Heyward is among the great defensive players in team history, and linebacker Malik Harrison is in his first season with the Steelers after playing five for the Baltimore Ravens.

The INT by Sawyer, from the Columbus suburb of Pickerington, led to a touchdown drive that put the Steelers ahead 24-7 with 14:16 left in the fourth quarter.

Tomlin was still smiling after the game when talking about him.

"Man, the sun is always shining on Jack Sawyer," Tomlin said. "He is a five-star."

In fact, it wasn't the first time the coach praised Sawyer. Following the Seattle game on Sept. 14, when he had seven tackles, two tackles for loss and his first career sack, Tomlin said, "I thought it was a significant improvement in the quality of his play on defense and in (special) teams. But I think that's a reasonable expectation for a lot of young people. I thought he played with more emotion, I thought he was more vocal, I thought he was more productive, probably because of the comfort. I'm excited about the extended opportunities that he's going to continue to get."

Sawyer's hard-nosed, football-is-life approach is suited to the Steelers' historically kick-butt attitude. While the team hasn't had much success lately, the fans still gravitate to that workmanlike approach.

Tomlin was all-in when the Steelers drafted him.

"Love Jack Sawyer," Tomlin said. "It's easy not only in terms of his résumé, but his relationship with the game, his approach to football business, how he's viewed and received by his teammates. As (general manager) Omar (Khan) mentioned, a lot of these guys represent Steelers DNA, and I think that's really indicative of Jack Sawyer."

He wasn't wrong.

"My relationship with the game, honestly, I love it," Sawyer told Steelers.com. "I just love football. Ever since I was a little kid, my dad will tell you the only thing I wanted to do was play football. I used to beg him to let me play when I was too young to sign up for the Pickerington Youth League in Ohio. Finally, he signed me up, and ever since then, I have loved the game of football."

"I can't even put into words what it's been able to do for my life. I love the game. I always want to be around football. A lot of guys use

football to help their lifestyle. I just love the game. I love to play, and I love to compete."

Second Nature

It's not a stretch to say Sawyer was bred to be a football player. His father, Lyle Sawyer, played football at Findlay (Ohio) University.

"My dad is a football junkie," Sawyer said. "Ever since I was little, I would be watching games with my dad. I'd be throwing the football when I was 1, 2 years old, watching games with him on the couch. He said he could tell from an early age that I had a love for the game. I think it started with watching football together on television every Saturday and Sunday and always dreaming about having a chance to do what I'm able to do now. It's just hard to explain."

Before he became a Steeler, he fulfilled a goal of playing for the Buckeyes after watching and rooting for them for so many years.

"We would go to friends' homes and watch games, and then the kids would go in the back yard and play tackle football," Sawyer said. "I would be getting grass stains all over my shirt and jeans that my mom just bought me. It was always so much fun."

Pickerington is known for producing Division I talent, and that competitiveness drives him.

"That's why I fell in love with football from the jump," he said. "And what motivates me is wanting to be the best. I want to prove myself and prove to the people who doubted that they were wrong and prove those who believed in me that they were right."

In his four seasons at Ohio State, Sawyer had 144 tackles, 23 sacks and 11 pass deflections. In his final season, he recorded a career-high 59 tackles with nine sacks.

Of course, he will be remembered for his 83-yard scoop-and-score against Texas quarterback and former OSU roommate Quinn Ewers when the Longhorns were driving late to tie it at 21, but instead Sawyer's score provided the 28-14 final margin.

"When you play this game of football, the games are won and lost between a few plays each game," Sawyer said. "I always try to prepare myself and get myself ready and the best fit for those big moments where the game matters the most."

"I just thank God I've been able to make some big plays at the college level in crunch moments, and hopefully I get the opportunity to do so at the next level too for the Steelers."

Sawyer has become an important cog on special teams and as an edge rusher or outside linebacker.

Through 10 games, he has 18 tackles, two for loss and one sack. He had two tackles in the 34-12 win over Cincinnati on Nov. 16

He credits his time at Ohio State with helping him transition to being a pro.

"Progressively, while at Ohio State, I realized the more you study and the more you know leading up to a game, and any little advantage you can get when you're on a field with other great athletes, that's where you separate yourself," Sawyer said. "Being a student of the game is something I take a lot of pride in. I try my very best to learn and study the opponent before games."

"I want to come in and study and learn from the guys that are in the room already who have established themselves."

But sometimes brute force works as well.

"That is how I was raised," he said. "When you're playing this game, it's physical. It's man on man. For lack of a better description, it is one guy that's going to kick the other guy's tail. You have to have that edge and an attitude when you go out there and play. That's how I grew up and was raised to play the game and other sports as well."

Steely Cam

Heyward, 36, reached a milestone against the Bengals on Nov. 16 by playing in his 221st regular-season game, breaking a tie with Hall of Fame center Mike Webster for second on the Steelers' all-time list behind quarterback Ben Roethlisberger (249).

He is the leader in games by a Pittsburgh defensive lineman, well ahead of Joe Greene's 181.

Heyward's total is tied for 15th with Justin Smith in NFL history for a defensive lineman.

"It's unbelievable. He's a unicorn, to be as elderly as he is, to play as well as he's playing," joked Steelers defensive coordinator Teryl Austin. "I think it's really a testament to him and his work ethic and the things that he does to stay prepared and engaged. When you're around him, he's almost like a 24-year-old new guy in the building. He really enjoys football, and he enjoys being around the guys. He works his tail off. I mean, it is really a testament to him and what he's put into this game that he's able to reach those heights and play as long as he has and still play as well as he has."

Hello. Goodbye

Former Buckeye running back Trey Sermon was released on Nov. 12 and cleared waivers the next day to make room for Howard to be activated off the injured reserve list.

Howard had been out for more than two months with a broken finger sustained in training camp. He is trying to make up for lost time as quickly as possible.

"It's limited opportunities but you have to maximize them," Howard said on Nov. 14. "Just going out there every day, and whether it's limited reps on offense, whether it's one rep a week or you just scout team that week, whatever it is, maximizing it, making it like real game reps as much as I can."

Sermon had been promoted from the practice squad to the 53-man roster the week before but became a victim of the numbers game. He played almost exclusively on special teams this season, and having cleared waivers, he could return to the Steelers' practice squad.

Growing

Harrison was injured in the first game but returned on Nov. 2.

"He'll continue to get better as he grows," Austin said. "He got injured in the first game. We just got him back. I think he'll continue to get better and be what we wanted when we signed him, which is to be the first- or second-down run stop guy, give you flexibility rushing off the edge, give you good blitzes vs. the back. That's what I see in him moving forward."



B1G Proceeding With Private Equity Deal

The Big Ten conference is reportedly nearing a 20-year, \$2.4 billion deal with a California pension fund that would extend the conference's grant of rights through 2046, though it may be without Michigan and USC in the agreement.

BIG TEN NOTES Sam Cipriani

According to the initial report from Ross Dellenger of Yahoo Sports, administrators and board members from USC and Michigan, the two universities not in agreement with the deal, were both told that if a 16-school agreement is finalized, both programs would receive a proposed three- to six-month grace period to decide whether to join.

The Big Ten has reportedly sent messages to Michigan and USC to signal that the conference is moving forward with the deal. If the two programs don't ultimately agree to the deal, they would not only lose potential financial benefits but would risk their future with the conference beyond 2036, which is the end of the current grant-of-rights agreement.

Big Ten officials are apparently trying to have a vote on the capital investment proposal on Nov. 21.

The agreement between the Big Ten and UC Enterprises would have the latter buy a 10 percent stake in Big Ten Enterprises – a new commercial arm of the conference that manages media rights, sponsorships and revenue streams – in the deal, in which each of the 16 schools would receive roughly \$135 million up front.

The Big Ten hadn't scheduled a time to vote on the issue before BSB went to

press, according to a statement from the conference made to Yahoo Sports.

The statement also said that the conference "continues to work closely with all member universities to explore a partnership to strengthen and modernize our conference. The Big Ten will provide its members adequate time to consider this opportunity with a not-for-profit financial partner."

The schools originally opposed the deal on Oct. 14, when Michigan's board of regents called the deal reckless and short-sighted. They described the deal as a bailout for Big Ten schools that have mismanaged their finances, referring to it as a "payday loan."

USC also publicly challenged the agreement and cited that there were too many uncertainties and moving parts in signing a 20-year deal, as well as the fact that the revenue share would be uneven, with Ohio State, Michigan and Penn State set to earn as much as \$190 million up front, which would be about \$40-\$50 million more than USC and Oregon. The other 13 schools would receive \$100-\$110 million.

Dellenger reported that many university board members outside of USC and Michigan say that they haven't been shown the full investment plan and were told that the decision doesn't rest with the board members and would solely be up to the university presidents and chancellors.

Michael Poliakoff, the president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) – a nonprofit organization that represents more than 20,000 university board members across the country – told Dellenger that there is concern about what the deal would mean for the university boards.

"This is an express train moving without remotely enough information available in a timely manner to these governing

boards," he said. "From what we know about the deal, it would cut governing boards out from critical oversight responsibilities."

At least one member of the Ohio State board of trustees was prepared to join a Nov. 17 call with ACTA that was set to include many board members from across the conference.

NCAA Issues MSU Multiple Punishments

Following multiple violations under former Michigan State head coach Mel Tucker, the NCAA has issued its punishments for the Spartans' infractions.

The NCAA's Division I Committee on Infractions (COI) found that Michigan State played three ineligible players after the Spartans had allocated over \$10,000 in "impermissible recruiting inducements" under Tucker, who led the program from 2020 until his dismissal on September 27, 2023, following a sexual harassment allegation.



Mel Tucker

In the resolution between the NCAA, Michigan State and the COI, the Spartan football program was handed several penalties, including the vacating of all wins (14) from 2022-24, show-cause orders for multiple former staff members, a three-year probation, and a \$30,000 fine plus 1.5 percent of the football program's budget.

There will be restrictions over the probationary period on official and unofficial visits, recruiting communications, recruiting-person days, and off-campus recruiting contacts and evaluations.

The NCAA found that the violations were tied to Tucker, former director of player personnel and recruiting Saeed Khalif, and former assistant coach Brandon Jordan.

The university's statement, issued by Michigan State president Kevin Guskiewicz and athletic director J Batt, underscored its focus on safeguarding its current student-athletes and the future of Spartan football.

"Today's announcement brings closure to an NCAA investigation resulting from violations committed by a previous staff," the statement said. "Michigan State pursued a negotiated resolution to minimize the penalties and limit the possible impact on our current football student-athletes and staff, who were not involved in the violations. With this matter behind us, we are able to move forward, focusing on the present and future of Spartan football."

"Michigan State athletics is committed to upholding the highest standards of integrity and operating in compliance with NCAA rules. Our compliance systems worked as intended. Once Michigan State became aware of a level 3 violation, we self-reported and followed all appropriate protocols. This prompt self-disclosure and acceptance of responsibility for the violations mitigated the case and penalties, even as new violations and corroborating

BIG 2025 Standings

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Indiana	8	0	1.000	11	0	1.000
Ohio State	7	0	1.000	10	0	1.000
Oregon	6	1	0.857	9	1	0.900
Michigan	6	1	0.857	8	2	0.800
USC	6	1	0.857	8	2	0.800
Nebraska	4	3	0.571	7	3	0.700
Illinois	4	3	0.571	7	3	0.700
Washington	4	3	0.571	7	3	0.700
Iowa	4	3	0.571	6	4	0.600
Minnesota	4	3	0.571	6	4	0.600
Northwestern	3	4	0.429	5	5	0.500
UCLA	3	4	0.429	3	7	0.300
Rutgers	2	5	0.286	5	5	0.500
Maryland	1	6	0.143	4	6	0.400
Wisconsin	1	6	0.143	3	7	0.300
Penn State	1	6	0.143	4	6	0.400
Michigan State	0	7	0.000	3	7	0.300
Purdue	0	8	0.000	2	9	0.182

Nov. 14 Game

Oregon 42, Minnesota 13

Nov. 15 Games

Michigan 24, Northwestern 22
Indiana 31, Wisconsin 7
Penn State 28, Michigan State 10
Illinois 24, Maryland 6
USC 26, Iowa 21
Washington 49, Purdue 13
Ohio State 48, UCLA 10

Nov. 22 Games

Washington at UCLA, 10:30 p.m.
Michigan at Maryland, 4 p.m.
Nebraska at Penn State, 7 p.m.
Rutgers at **Ohio State**, Noon
Michigan State at Iowa, 3:30 p.m.
Illinois at Wisconsin, 7:30 p.m.
USC at Oregon, 3:30 p.m.
Minnesota at Northwestern, Noon

All times Eastern

evidence were uncovered during the subsequent investigation."

According to the NCAA's case, Khalif and Jordan "knowingly provided impermissible recruiting inducements in connection with prospective student-athletes' unofficial visits," while Jordan failed to cooperate with NCAA staff multiple times throughout the investigation.

Khalif received a six-year show-cause penalty, and Jordan was given five years, while both received a 12-game suspension in their first season. Tucker received a three-year show-cause order and a suspension of 30 percent of games in his first season if he returns to college football.

The university acknowledged the NCAA violations while highlighting its commitment to integrity, emphasizing both its compliance efforts and its disagreement with certain penalties.

"While we accept the NCAA's findings and respect the process, we are disappointed in the prescribed penalty related to the vacation of records," the statement said. "We understand that the enforcement process follows established guidelines, but we also recognize the opportunity for continued modernization."



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Rose Bowl Restraining Order Denied

The Los Angeles Superior Court has denied the request from the city of Pasadena, Calif., and the Rose Bowl Operating Company for a restraining order that would have prevented UCLA from hosting home games at venues other than the Rose Bowl.

The court stated that, since there was no immediate sign that UCLA planned to depart from the Rose Bowl, a restraining order was not necessary.

The issue stems from the city and the Rose Bowl Operating Company suing UCLA on Oct. 30, seeking to enforce the lease agreement between the school and stadium that they claim locks the Bruins into playing home games at the venue until 2044.

In the Nov. 10 filing, the city of Pasadena and the Rose Bowl Operating Company warned that UCLA's departure would disrupt operations and sought a restraining order to prevent any relocation.

"There is no way to sugarcoat it: UCLA has confirmed its imminent departure, severely destabilizing Plaintiffs' core operations," the filing said. "Those operations are structured around and contingent upon UCLA."

In his ruling, Judge James C. Chalfant noted that UCLA's next scheduled home game at the Rose Bowl isn't until the fall of 2026 and encouraged the city and Rose Bowl Operating Company to gather information from UCLA about any discussions with SoFi Stadium. He indicated that a motion for a preliminary injunction could be filed before the 2026 season begins if plans to play home games elsewhere are proven then.

The city of Pasadena responded to the ruling with a statement, emphasizing that while the court did not grant immediate relief, it recognized the potential for harm and allowed the city and Rose Bowl Operating Company to pursue further legal action.

"We appreciate the court's careful and thoughtful consideration before its ruling on Nov. 12," the statement said. "While the court held that – on UCLA's representation that it had not signed an agreement with SoFi Stadium yet – no emergency existed which demanded temporary relief, the court did invite the city of Pasadena and the Rose Bowl Operating Company to seek discovery and to file a motion for a preliminary injunction. His Honor also concluded there is real and concrete evidence of injury and irreparable harm to the city not compensable by money damages alone."

Locksley Dismisses Job Concerns

Despite five straight losses to Big Ten opponents following a 4-0 start to the season, Maryland head coach Mike Locksley did not feel his job was in danger as of his Nov. 11 press conference.

Locksley said he hadn't heard any outside noise calling for his firing after a 35-20 loss to Rutgers on Nov. 8 in Piscataway, N.J.

When asked whether he believed he deserved to keep his job as Maryland's head coach, Locksley gave a straightforward answer of, "Yes."

And when reporters pressed him further, asking why, Locksley's response was equally brief.

"I'm the head coach at the University of Maryland," he said.

According to Maryland athletic director Jim Smith, Locksley is being kept under close watch.

Smith said the athletic department will continue to evaluate Locksley's performance going forward and will wait until the end of the season to make a decision.

"He's going to coach against Illinois, then he's going to coach against Michigan, and then he's going to coach against Michigan State. We've got a chance to win three games and go to a bowl game. We can't make a decision right now. That would be silly," Smith told Taylor Lyons of the Baltimore Sun for a story published before the Terrapins' 24-6 loss to Illinois on Nov. 15.

Locksley was hired as Maryland's head coach in 2019 and has spent six seasons as the Terrapins' head coach, accruing a 36-42 record in that time. He has just a 16-41 record against Big Ten opponents during that span.

IU's Cignetti Defends Fickell

In the midst of a disastrous 3-7 season for Wisconsin, Indiana head coach Curt Cignetti shed light on the Badgers' struggles under head coach Luke Fickell.

Cignetti noted that with Wisconsin's ongoing issues keeping quarterbacks healthy, it's no surprise that Fickell is facing challenges winning games with the Badgers, pointing to his past success.

"I have a lot of respect for Coach Fickell," said Cignetti at his Nov. 10 press conference. "He's a proven winner. The guy has had his starting quarterback available about 30 percent of the time during his tenure at Wisconsin. That's a tough duty."

Following a 2-1 start to the season, Wisconsin fell in six straight games to conference opponents before a 13-10 victory over Washington on Nov. 8 in which the Badgers' backup punter, Sean West, was their leading passer with one completion for 24 yards.

Wisconsin has cycled through three starting quarterbacks, the first of whom was Billy Edwards Jr., who went down in the Badgers' first game of the season, before getting injured again against Maryland in Week 4. Backup Danny O'Neil then suffered a leg injury in the win over Washington before third- and fourth-stringers Hunter Simmons and Carter Smith took over.

The curse of injuries to the quarterback hasn't haunted Wisconsin only this season. Tyler Van Dyke suffered a torn ACL in the third game of the 2024 season, while Tanner Mordecai missed three games and half of one in 2023 due to a broken hand.

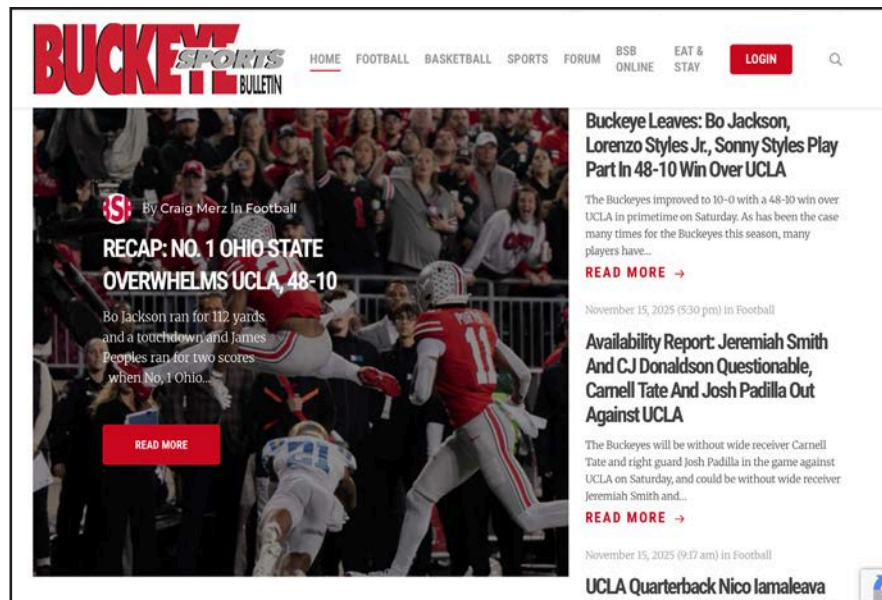
In three seasons under Fickell, Wisconsin has a 16-20 record and a 9-16 mark in conference play after a 31-7 loss to Cignetti and the Hoosiers on Nov. 15 in Bloomington, Ind.



Luke Fickell

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Royal Misses App State Game With Hip Injury

When the Buckeyes took the court against App State on Nov. 11, junior forward Devin Royal wasn't in the starting lineup as he usually is.

COURT REPORT Greg Wilson

Before the game, Royal was listed as out, and he watched from the bench while the Buckeyes took down the Mountaineers 75-53.

The injury goes back at least as far as Ohio State's second game of the season against Purdue Fort Wayne, when Royal was seen on an exercise bike as the second half began.

He was able to return later in that contest and score six points on two three-pointers, but on the day before the game against App State, head coach Jake Diebler gave more of an update on Royal's status, saying it was a hip injury that he's been dealing with.

"It's nothing anybody is anticipating being long-term," Diebler said. "It's just that he's feeling it, then he'll make some progress, then have a step back, make more progress and a step back. We're just trying to get it to a place where he can turn the corner."

When Royal was out to begin the second half against the Mastodons, it was sophomore guard Gabe Cupps on the court in his place, but when the Mountaineers came to Columbus, it was sophomore forward Colin White who got the first start of his college career.

White dealt with lingering injuries of his own throughout the past year with the Buckeyes, so Diebler was happy to see the sophomore get to make his first start.

"It's been a roller coaster now for about 12 months for him," Diebler said after the win. "The exciting thing for us is that he's been more consistent lately, and he had a great two days of prep. I felt like he earned the right to play for us."

"Him representing the toughness and the winning over everything is part of why he started. The other part of it is, early on in the season, you're trying to establish some substitution patterns and have somewhat of a consistent rhythm to the game. It made the most sense to put (White) in so we could still bring Gabe in as the first perimeter player."

White finished the game without a point, and he brought down four rebounds.

Sophomore guard John Mobley Jr. was questionable going into the game with an illness, but he played and was the second-leading scorer with 16 points, half of them coming from the free-throw line.

"He showed a great deal of toughness. He wasn't even able to practice yesterday," Diebler said in the postgame press conference. "For a guy that wasn't able to practice, to go out and do what he did was big time."

Diebler Happy With Defensive Progress

After the Buckeyes gave up 102 points to IU Indy in the season opener, there were questions about the defensive ability of OSU.

In the two games following, Ohio State gave up 68 and 53 points. Against App State, the Buckeyes were able to force the Mountaineers to run the shot clock down to the last few seconds multiple times, which led to bad shots for the opposing team, which Diebler was very happy to see.

"It's contagious," Diebler said about what a great defensive possession does for the team's energy. "We've talked a lot about our defense and finishing plays. That could mean with a rebound, executing coverages all the way through the clock. We didn't do a good enough job of that in game one, and we've gotten better each game."

While the Buckeyes have seemed better off defensively since the game against IU Indy, the Jaguars' pace of play is proving to be a big reason that the game was so high scoring, along with some possible defensive mishaps.

In four games since they played the Buckeyes, the Jaguars have scored 90, 80, 121 and 90 points, an average of 95.3 per game.

But Diebler came out of that game knowing the defense needed improvements since he knows it will be crucial in conference games when opposing teams are trying to limit possessions.

"When our offense isn't rolling at max capacity, like it wasn't for significant chunks of (the App State game), we've got to be able to finish a defensive possession," Diebler said. "You saw multiple times in that game the energy that it gives us and the excitement and the connection of our team when we did finish plays."

Lucas Rings Bell, Statue Unveiled

Ohio State football honored another all-time great from the Buckeye basketball program as the victory bell ringer for its 48-10 win over UCLA on Nov. 15.

Hall of Famer Jerry Lucas was slated to ring the victory bell before kickoff against the Bruins. It's the same weekend that Lucas' statue outside the Schottenstein Center was unveiled, with the bronze sculpture being revealed on Nov. 14.

His family came with him to the unveiling of his statue, with his three sons and one daughter pulling the veil off after many speeches were made about the legacy of Lucas at Ohio State.

"It's the highest honor I've ever had in my life," Lucas said after his statue was revealed on the north side of the Schott. "I've had the honor to play with some great coaches and great teammates, but to be honored like this is beyond what my dreams would ever be. I was thrilled, excited, and couldn't be more overjoyed."

It was the first time Lucas saw the statue, but he knew that it would be a sculpture of him



SONNY BROCKWAY

LIVING LEGEND — Ohio State great Jerry Lucas was honored Nov. 14 to 16 with the unveiling of a statue outside the Schottenstein Center of him shooting his famous hook as well as being chosen to ring the victory bell before the football game against UCLA. The weekend was capped by him dotting the "i" at halftime of the men's basketball game vs. Notre Dame.

shooting his famous hook shot. He was very happy with how it turned out and thanked the sculptor, Alan Cottrell, who was at the unveiling as well.

"The sculptor did an unbelievable job," Lucas said. "He said it was the most difficult statue he's ever done because there was so much detail in the ball at the top of my fingertips."

"(My favorite part) is the pose. The hook shot was my favorite shot. I practiced it for countless hours. I tried to shoot 5,000 shots a day, which takes a long time to do. That was my favorite shot."

Due to recent health issues, Lucas wasn't able to ring the victory bell at the football game, but he stood on the field pregame and received a standing ovation while Diebler and former Ohio State players Aaron Craft and Jared Sullinger rang the bell in his place.

The day after the football game against UCLA, Lucas was back at Value City Arena to dot the "i" on the basketball court at halftime of Ohio State's game against Notre Dame.

Lucas played at Ohio State for three seasons, sitting out his freshman year since first-year players weren't allowed to play at the time. In those three seasons, he became the all-time leading scorer for the Buckeyes with 1,990 points. Since then, he has been passed

by Dennis Hopson and Herb Williams, but he still holds the rebounding record with 1,411 boards (17.2 per game).

Recruits Sign With OSU

Ohio State officially added two players to its 2026 class on Nov. 12 when Hudson (Ohio) Western Reserve Academy five-star small forward Anthony Thompson (6-8, 205) and Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Prolific Prep four-star power forward Alex Smith (6-9, 195) signed with the Buckeyes at the beginning of the early signing period.

Thompson officially becomes the first five-star prospect signed by the Buckeyes since D'Angelo Russell in the 2014 class. Thompson is also the highest-rated player signed by OSU since Sullinger in 2010.

"Anthony is a special player," said Diebler in a statement. "His combination of size, skill, and athleticism gives him unique versatility. Who he is aligns with what our program is all about, and the basketball IQ he has will help him be really impactful right away. Being from Ohio and coming to Ohio State means something to him, and we are excited for Anthony and his family to join ours."

Thompson is a left-handed forward with a

OSU Men's Basketball Signees

Players in the class of 2026 who have signed to play basketball at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Alex Smith	F	6-9	195	★★★★	Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Prolific Prep
Anthony Thompson	F	6-8	205	★★★★	Hudson (Ohio) Western Reserve Acad.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

7-3 wingspan and is ranked the No. 8 player in the class. He averaged 21.5 points, 8.3 rebounds, 2.5 assists and 1.4 blocks per game for his high school team as a junior.

Smith is the No. 145 player in the class and No. 25 at his position. He averaged 19.8 points, 6.3 rebounds and 2.0 assists per game as a junior at nearby Upper Arlington High School before transferring to Prolific Prep for his senior season.

“Alex and his family love the Buckeyes, and we couldn’t be more excited for him to officially join our family,” Diebler said. “He is highly skilled, has positional size, and a high basketball IQ, which will be an asset for us. Alex has shown tremendous growth as a player because of his work ethic and will fit perfectly into the culture of our program because of who he is.”

Since the official signing day isn’t until April 15, 2026, Ohio State still has time to add to its 2026 class if it wants to.

Thornton Earns Weekly Honors

After senior guard Bruce Thornton scored a career-high 38 points against Purdue Fort Wayne on Nov. 7, he was named the co-Big Ten Player of the Week along with Indiana forward Tucker DeVries.

DeVries averaged 22.5 points per game and 8.0 rebounds in the two games the Hoosiers played, while Thornton scored 32.0 points per game on 77.8 percent shooting. He shot 58.3 percent from beyond the arc and added 5.0 rebounds and 4.5 assists per game as well, while shooting 10 of 12 from the foul line against IU Indy.

He was the first Buckeye to score 38 points in a game since Sullinger scored 40 in a Dec. 9, 2010, game against IUPUI.

With his performance, Thornton was also named the Big Ten’s Oscar Robertson Trophy National Player of the Week.

It was Thornton’s second time being named the conference player of the week after his 30-point game against No. 4 Kentucky in an 85-65 win at Madison Square Garden on Dec. 21, 2024.

After his impressive week, Thornton was No. 1 in the country in points per game, two points ahead of Jadin Booth of Samford, who was in second place.

Thornton followed up his week with 13 points against App State with three assists and three rebounds.

Thornton Passes Diebler In Points

The senior guard still has a long way to go as he continues to climb up the all-time scoring ranks at Ohio State, but in his 38-point performance against Purdue Fort Wayne, he passed someone very familiar to his head coach, Jake Diebler’s brother, Jon.

“Good. It will knock him down a peg,” Diebler joked after the game.

Jake Diebler went on to recognize the impact his brother had at Ohio State and what he means to the university.

“The legacy that my brother had in his time here was really special,” Diebler said. “It’s where my affection for the program took such deep roots. Although my brother would probably tell you that if he shot eight threes, he would make seven or eight of them.”

The head coach likened Thornton to many other Buckeyes who have gone through the program and stayed four years with the team.

“But I get to see how Bruce operates every

BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL (10-0, 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, W 38-14; **8** at Purdue, W 34-10; **15** UCLA, W 48-10; **22** RUTGERS; **29** at Michigan.

MEN'S BASKETBALL (4-0)

Oct. 26 Ohio (Exh.), W 103-74.
Nov. 3 IU-INDY, W 118-102; **7** PURDUE-FORT WAYNE, W 94-68; **11** APPALACHIAN STATE, W 75-53; **16** NOTRE DAME, W 64-63; **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 (2-1)

Nov. 9 COPPIN STATE, W 88-59; **13** BELLARMINE, W 90-33; **16** at UConn, L 100-68; **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, Men 10th/15, Women 10th/18.
Nov. 14 NCAA Great Lakes Regional Championship in Evansville, Ind., Men 10th/30, Women 10th/32; **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, M 3-2, W 4-1; **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 (7-9, 3-5)

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, L 2-1 (OT); **26** at Northwestern, L 7-0; **31** IOWA, L 3-2 (2OT).
Nov. 6 Big Ten Tournament at Bloomington, Ind., vs. Maryland, W 2-1; **7** Big Ten Tournament at Bloomington, Ind., vs. Iowa, L 3-1

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (5-5, 1-3)

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, L 2-1 (OT); W 3-0; **30-31** PENN STATE, L 3-2, L 4-3.
Nov. 14-15 at Wisconsin, W 5-1; L 6-5 (OT); **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 (11-1-0, 9-1-0)

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, W 5-1; W 4-2; **31** at St. Thomas, W 3-2 (OT).
Nov. 1 at St. Thomas, W 8-0; **14-15** MINNESOTA STATE, W 5-2; W 7-3; **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. 7-8 at Wisconsin; **13-14** MINNESOTA; **20-21** at Bemidji State; **27-March 1** WCHA First Round.

MEN'S SOCCER (6-10, 3-7)

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, L 5-0; **31** PENN STATE, W 1-0.
Nov. 7 at Northwestern, L 2-1.

MENS SWIM & DIVE (1-1)

Nov. 7-8 Raleigh Rumble in Raleigh, N.C., vs. NC State, L 790.0-485.5; vs. Virginia Tech, W 485.5-429.0; **18-21** OHIO STATE FALL INVITATIONAL.
Dec. 3-6 US Open at Austin, Texas.
Jan 17 MICHIGAN; **23-24** Texas Invitational at Austin, Texas; **31** PITTSBURGH.
Feb. 13-15 OHIO STATE WINTER INVITATIONAL; **25-28** Big Ten Championships at Madison, Wis.
March 8 LAST CHANCE MEET; **9-11** NCAA Zone Diving Championships, TBD; **13-15** CSCAA National Invitational Championship at Ocala, Fla.; **25-28** NCAA Championships at Atlanta.

WOMENS SWIM & DIVE (1-1)

Nov. 7-8 Raleigh Rumble in Raleigh, N.C., vs. NC State, L 790.0-546.0; vs. Virginia Tech, W 546.0-364.5; **18-21** OHIO STATE FALL INVITATIONAL.
Dec. 3-6 US Open at Austin, Texas.
Jan 17 MICHIGAN; **23-24** Texas Invitational at Austin, Texas; **31** PITTSBURGH.
Feb. 13-15 OHIO STATE WINTER INVITATIONAL; **18-21** Big Ten Championships at Minneapolis.
March 8 LAST CHANCE MEET; **9-11** NCAA Zone Diving Championships, TBD; **13-15** CSCAA National Invitational Championship at Ocala, Fla.; **18-21** NCAA Championships at Atlanta.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL (5-19, 2-14)

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, L 3-0; **26** PENN STATE, L 3-1; **31** RUTGERS, L 3-0.
Nov. 2 WISCONSIN, L 3-0; **8** at Maryland, W 3-2; **9** at Rutgers, W 3-2; **14** at Michigan, L 3-0 **16** at Penn State, L 3-2; **21** NORTHWESTERN; **23** MICHIGAN STATE; **28** at Iowa; **29** at Nebraska.

WRESTLING

Nov. 2 Clarion Open at Clarion, Pa., NTS; **9** at Tennessee-Chattanooga, W 42-4; **15** National Duals Invitational at Tulsa vs. Wyoming, W 33-6; vs. Minnesota, W 29-6; **16** National Duals Invitational at Tulsa vs. Nebraska, W 33-3; vs. Iowa W 27-12; **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.

coach, when you’re going into year two of building a program, when you have a guy who reflects the work ethic, the consistency and the toughness that you want your program built upon, it really helps. He’s been critical in helping build our culture in this new program, and I’m forever thankful to him for that.”

Sixth Year Denied For Johnson

Former Penn State forward Donovan “Puff” Johnson’s appeal for eligibility that he filed on Nov. 5 was denied by the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio Eastern Division.

On Nov. 11, the court ruled that Johnson’s appeal wasn’t warranted because the denial of

his original waiver for a sixth year of eligibility, filed in September, did not violate antitrust law.

Johnson was seeking a temporary restraining order that would have allowed him to play for the Buckeyes immediately. He is already enrolled at Ohio State, but he will now not be eligible to play this season, seemingly.

Johnson and his lawyer argued that the forward deserved another year of eligibility due to a history of injuries that plagued his five-year college career, in which he played in at least 14 games each year.

It’s not clear whether Johnson will continue to pursue another year of eligibility, and if he does continue, whether he will still try to play for Ohio State.

Freshmen Make Marks Early For Buckeyes

Through two games, it had been a somewhat disappointing start for Ohio State's additions out of the transfer portal. Senior guard T'yana Todd and redshirt-freshman guard Kylee Kitts, who transferred into the program from Boston College and Florida, respectively, had failed to score 10 individual points in a game so far this season.

However, several freshmen made an impact off the bench through the first two games. To start the season, no freshman Buckeye has been more impactful than Da-

DOUBLE
DRIBBLE

Bobby Gorbett

sha Biriuk. The 6-1 guard was averaging 8.5 points and 1.5 rebounds while shooting 42.9 percent from the field. Biriuk had a coming-out party of sorts during Ohio State's 90-33 win over Bellarmine on Nov. 13. In that game, the four-star guard scored 15 points on 5-of-11 shooting.

After the Buckeyes' win over the Knights, head coach Kevin McGuff said he was encouraged by Biriuk's start to her collegiate career.

"She's a really, really talented offensive player, and I think she's going to continue to blossom and really provide a lot of offensive firepower for us," McGuff said. "She just has to learn what we do defensively a little bit more to raise her effectiveness for us, but she's off to a good start."

Biriuk wasn't the only player to benefit from the Buckeyes' blowout over the Knights. In the 57-point win, McGuff gave over 15 minutes of playing time to not just Biriuk, but redshirt-freshman forward Seini Henry, redshirt-freshman center Ella Hobbs and freshman guard Bryn Martin. McGuff said following the game that it was important to get his newcomers some experience.

"I think we're still trying to figure out who's going to play best together, and so we need to play as many people as we can to see some different rotations and to get our newcomers experience on the court," McGuff said "It's nice to be able to do that, and we got some great film that we can show them. Hopefully, this experience will really be helpful."

Like Biriuk, Hobbs had a strong performance against the Knights. The 6-4 center scored seven points and grabbed a game-high 10 rebounds, while connecting on all three of her field-goal attempts.

For the season, Hobbs was averaging 4.5 points and 8.0 rebounds per game.

Cambridge Earns First 'Dub Crown'

In Ohio State's season-opening 88-59 win over Coppin State on Nov. 9, Kennedy Cambridge was somewhat surprisingly included in the starting lineup. Although Cambridge



FILE PHOTO

NEW SEASON — Kennedy Cambridge (3) was a surprise starter in Ohio State's season-opening 88-59 win over Coppin State on Nov. 9. The junior guard made only four starts last season, but she rewarded coach Kevin McGuff with 11 points and a career-high seven steals against the Eagles.

is one of the longest tenured Buckeyes, she started in only four games last year.

In Ohio State's first game, McGuff's decision to put Cambridge on the court paid dividends. She scored 11 points and had a career-high seven steals. Cambridge's season-opening performance earned her the "dub crown," given after each Buckeye win to Ohio State's best player.

"Kennedy, I thought, was outstanding today," McGuff said after Ohio State's first game. "Her effort and energy are a great fit for our style of play, and I think you saw that today. She seemed to be all over the court and just made a lot of positive things happen."

Cambridge certainly stuffed the stat sheet in the win. The junior guard tacked on five rebounds and five assists against the Eagles and was fairly efficient from the field, making 5 of 9 field-goal attempts.

But it was her defensive presence that gave the rest of the team a spark. In addition to going for seven steals, Cambridge consistently disrupted Coppin State's offense with deflections and pressure. According to Kennedy's sister and teammate Jaloni, her defensive effort was a crucial part of the win.

"Even if we don't get the ball back, (assistant coach Katie Smith) always says getting deflections helps us to get another steal out of that," Jaloni said. "Playing hard, that's what we do best. You have to jump around, fly around and get the ball. You play to win, do everything it takes to win, do everything it takes to get the ball back."

Before the season, it seemed like Todd,

who transferred into Ohio State from Boston College over the offseason, was the favorite to start at the wing position. Todd shot 45.9 percent from three-point range last season, the fourth-best mark nationally, but ultimately McGuff went with Cambridge's experience in Ohio State's system for the first game.

"She has the benefit of having been in our system now for several years, and I think that matters as well," McGuff said. "(It was) a combination of just how she's been playing in practice and her experience that gave her a chance."

Full-Court Press Effective Early

One thing McGuff made abundantly clear about his 2025-26 team is that it may not be as athletic as some of his other teams have been.

Without defensive stalwarts Cotie McMahon and Taylor Thierry on the team for the first time in three years, it would be easy to think the Buckeyes' signature full-court press would drop off. However, through two games, the Buckeyes have been fairly effective in forcing turnovers with their press.

Against Coppin State, the Buckeyes had 13 steals and forced 23 turnovers. McGuff said, although Ohio State's press was good against the Eagles, he hoped it would continue to improve.

"It was good at times. I think it could be better," McGuff said. "We didn't always pressure the ball at the point of attack. When we did, it seemed to be problematic for them, and then we also allowed them to throw it in and make one quick pass up the court, either in the middle or up the sideline, which we're not supposed to allow. There were some execution issues that hopefully we can address."

The Buckeyes were still effective in their 90-33 win over Bellarmine on Nov. 12. In

that game, Ohio State forced 19 turnovers and had eight steals.

Ohio State still may not have the type of athleticism it had last year, but according to Kennedy Cambridge, that doesn't mean the team will struggle to pressure its opponents.

"I don't really think you have to be athletic to run (a 2-2-1 full-court press)," Kennedy said. "I think that it's about heart and grit, and that's why we're thriving. It's really easy to sprint. It's really easy to get in front of your defender, and that's heart. That's grit."

Ohio State Signs Four-Star PG

When the early-signing window opened on Nov. 12, Ohio State inked four-star point guard Atlee Vanesko.

Ranked as the No. 74 player in the country, according to ESPN's SportsCenter NEXT 100 rankings, she is a 5-10 point guard from Westtown School in Norristown, Pa. Vanesko had been committed to Ohio State since July 25 and had offers from other Power Four programs such as Miami, Stanford and Virginia Tech.

In addition to visiting Ohio State on Aug. 30, Vanesko visited Virginia Tech on Sept. 6, but McGuff ensured the point guard would be playing in scarlet and gray next year by signing her on the first day of the early signing period.

Shortly after Vanesko officially signed with Ohio State, McGuff detailed what she will bring to the program.

"We're excited to welcome Atlee to our WBB family," said McGuff in a statement posted to Ohio State's women's basketball Twitter account. "She is a great kid with a high basketball IQ and can play multiple positions in our system. Her competitive character will make an immediate impact on our program."

At Westtown School, Vanesko helped her team to its fourth straight PAISAA title in 2024-25.

Vanesko, a capable scorer with enough size to guard multiple positions defensively, should immediately provide the Buckeyes with some needed depth behind star point guard Jaloni Cambridge when she joins the team next year.

As BSB went to press, Vanesko was the only player in the 2026 recruiting class signed with Ohio State.

OSU Still Unranked In AP Top 25

Despite being ranked No. 25 in the coaches' poll, Ohio State was not included in the Associated Press' top-25 rankings following the first week of games. The Buckeyes, who were also not included in the preseason rankings, received more votes (27) than any unranked team.

The early rankings indicate Ohio State will face off against several difficult opponents. In addition to already playing No. 1-ranked UConn, Ohio State will face ranked Big Ten teams, with No. 3 UCLA, No. 8 USC, No. 9 Maryland, No. 14 Michigan, No. 21 Iowa, No. 24 Michigan State and No. 25 Washington all on the schedule.

Ohio State will also face No. 17 TCU as part of its nonconference schedule.

OSU Women's Basketball Verbal Commitments				
Players in the class of 2026 who have issued a verbal commitment to play basketball at Ohio State.				
Player	Pos.	Ht.	Stars	High School/Previous Team
Atlee Vanesko	G	5-11	★★★★	Norristown (Pa.) Westtown School

Ohio State Overcomes Cold Start To Win

By **GREG WILSON**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

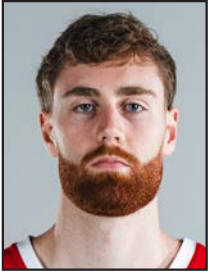
Ohio State started cold on Nov. 11, missing its first 11 shots from deep, but started to heat up late in the first half of a 75-53 win over App State at Value City Arena in front of 7,938 fans.

The Buckeyes were led by senior forward Brandon Noel, who had 17 points. Sophomore guard John Mobley Jr. was close behind with 16.

Ohio State played well defensively, too, holding the Mountaineers to just 28 points in the second half on 11-of-29 shooting (37.9 percent).

The Buckeyes were ice cold from the field to begin the game, scoring just two points in the first 6:30 of the game, missing each of their first eight three-point attempts during that span and making just 1 of 12 shots total. App State got out to a 10-2 lead with the help of five points from graduate guard Kasen Jennings.

It wasn't until senior guard Bruce Thornton got to the line to make two free throws that their scoring drought ended.



Brandon Noel

Freshman forward Amare Bynum put an emphatic stop to the Mountaineers' run with an offensive board and a putback dunk over multiple defenders to make the score 12-6.

But after another Bynum bucket, App State made three of its next four field goals, two of them from beyond the arc, to take a 22-10 lead into an Ohio State timeout.

Noel knocked down the first three-pointer of the game for Ohio State with just under six minutes remaining in the half.

The deficit extended to 10 points, 25-15, at 5:29 before App State called a timeout of its own.

"A lot of our shots were good shots, they just weren't falling," Noel said. "We came into timeouts and weren't flinching like, 'Oh man, what's wrong?' We were just like, 'We know what's going on. Keep playing hard. Keep playing defense and let that keep us in the game until our offense gets going.'"

The Buckeyes went on a 12-0 run to take a 27-25 lead with under a minute remaining in the half, immediately after the Mountaineers' timeout. A Thornton buzzer-beating three made it 15 straight points for the Buckeyes, who took a 30-25 lead into halftime.

The run was powered by eight straight points from Mobley on a jumper and six free throws. The Buckeyes closed the half on a 20-3 scoring run, keeping App State scoreless for the final 5:28 of the frame.

After the Mountaineers quickly cut the deficit to 4, Ohio State had an 8-0 run that led to a 41-29 lead with 16 minutes left in the contest. After an App State three, the Buckeyes went on a 16-0 run to stretch their lead to 25, 57-32, with 9:24 remaining. Six different Buckeyes scored points during the run.

The lead stretched to as much as 27 several times, the first on an alley-oop from junior guard Taison Chatman to Noel at 4:07, and the Buckeyes closed out the game with a 22-point win.

Ohio State was led by Noel's double-double, with 17 points on 8-of-10 shooting and 11 rebounds. Mobley had 16 points and Thornton had 13. Senior center Christoph Tilly had a game-leading four assists.

The Mountaineers had just one player reach double figures. Jennings scored 12 points, shooting 5 of 17 from the field.

Ohio State ended up 7 of 27 from deep for a 25.9 percentage.



Amare Bynum



John Mobley Jr.

Buckeye Women's Defense Shines In Dominant Win

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

Ohio State (2-0) flexed its muscles defensively in its 90-33 win over Bellarmine (1-2) on Nov. 13 in front of 4,671 fans at Value City Arena.

Not only did the Buckeyes keep their opponent completely out of the scoring column for an entire a quarter for the first time in program history to start the game, but they held the Knights to 11-of-60 shooting (18.3 percent) and forced 19 turnovers on the night.

"I thought our energy to start the game was good, both with the full-court pressure and in the half court," said Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff of Ohio State's defensive effort. "We kind of guarded the ball and helped each other a little more defensively than we probably did in the first game, and so I think we took a positive step there."

Ohio State's defensive intensity started immediately in the win. In the first 4:24 of the game, the Buckeyes didn't allow a single point and forced five Bellarmine turnovers.

The Buckeyes weren't nearly as productive offensively. By the time of the game's first media timeout at 4:33, Ohio State had converted only three of its first 12 field-goal attempts, but that shooting mark was still good enough for an 11-0 lead.

The Buckeyes' defensive dominance continued after the media timeout. Ohio State forced six more misses and four more turnovers before the end of the quarter.

For the entire quarter, Ohio State allowed zero points on 0-of-17 shooting and forced nine turnovers. Before the Nov. 13 matchup between the Knights and Buckeyes, the best defensive quarter in program history came on Dec. 4, 2016, when Ohio State held Cincinnati to a one-point fourth quarter during an 80-38 win.

While that historic defensive accomplishment was taking place, junior guard Chance Gray helped Ohio State extend its lead to 26-0 by scoring six points in the final 3:05 of the opening frame.

It wasn't until sophomore forward Rachel Shropshire made 1 of 2 at the free-throw line at the 9:35 mark of the second quarter that the Knights finally got on the board. That free throw was followed by a 10-3 scoring run by the Buckeyes. Five different Buckeyes scored during the run, including freshman center Ella Hobbs, who ended the run with a layup that put the home team up 36-4.

The Knights made their first goal field at the 3:14 mark of the second quarter, when junior guard Triniti Ralston made a three-point jumper. Hobbs responded with the first three-pointer of her career 44 seconds later. Hobbs' triple helped Ohio State take a 46-10 lead into halftime.

Sophomore point guard Jaloní Cambridge helped Ohio State get out to a strong start in the second half with eight points in the first 2:14 to put the Buckeyes up 54-12.

The Buckeye defense wasn't quite as good in the second half.

The Knights went on an 8-2 scoring run during the middle of the third quarter, but that only cut Ohio State's lead to 62-20. First-year Buckeyes T'yana Todd, Dasha Biriuk and Bryn Martin combined to score all nine points during the 9-3 run that pushed the lead to 71-23.

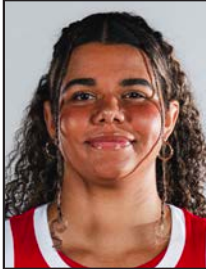
With a 49-point lead heading into the fourth quarter, 73-24, McGuff was able to give his starters some rest. Biriuk helped the Buckeyes put the finishing touches on their 57-point win with a team-high 10 points in the final frame.

Cambridge was Ohio State's leading scorer in the victory. She finished the game with 18 points on 6-of-12 shooting and tacked on eight rebounds and two assists. Biriuk (15 points), Gray (14), and sophomore guard Ava

Watson (11) also reached double figures. Martin added a game-high four assists, while Hobbs led the Buckeyes with 10 rebounds, helping OSU to 65 total compared to 36 for the visitors.

As a team, Ohio State shot 32 of 75 from the field (42.7 percent) and made 8 of 34 from beyond the arc (23.5 percent).

Sophomore forward Kayce Hyman was Bellarmine's leading scorer with eight points.



Ella Hobbs

Ohio State 75, App State 53									
Nov. 11, 2025 Value City Arena • Columbus									
		1	2	F					
Appalachian State (2-2)		25	28	53					
Ohio State (3-0)		30	45	75					
App State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.					
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Jennings	32	5-17	0-0	0-1	1	3	12		
Wilson	28	3-4	1-3	2-5	1	1	7		
Banks	27	1-5	2-3	0-3	3	4	4		
Moodie	13	0-1	0-0	0-3	0	2	0		
Dodd	18	0-6	0-0	1-3	2	3	0		
Tot	19	3-7	0-0	0-1	0	3	9		
Clarke Jr.	22	3-4	2-2	0-2	2	4	8		
Njock	25	3-6	0-0	3-3	0	1	8		
Marcus Jr.	14	2-6	0-0	1-2	1	4	5		
Brim	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Totals	200	20-56	5-8	7-24	10	25	53		
Percentages: FG: 35.7%. FT: 62.5%. Three-point field goals: 8-25 (Jennings 2-6, Tot 3-5, Njock 2-5, Marcus 1-5, Dodd 0-2, Banks 0-2). Team rebounds: 1. Blocked shots: 0. Turnovers: 9 (Dodd 3, Jennings 3, Marcus, Clarke, Team). Steals: 0.									
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.					
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Noel	27	8-10	0-0	4-7	1	1	17		
Mobley Jr.	26	3-11	8-9	1-3	3	0	16		
Thornton	31	3-7	5-6	0-3	3	2	13		
Tilly	30	2-9	5-5	2-3	4	1	9		
White	18	0-2	0-1	1-3	0	1	0		
Bynum	13	3-8	2-2	2-0	0	1	8		
Cupps	27	1-4	2-2	1-3	1	2	5		
Njegovan	10	1-1	2-2	0-3	0	3	4		
Chatman	13	1-1	0-2	0-0	3	4	3		
Grujicic	5	0-1	0-3	0-0	0	0	0		
Totals	200	29-62	18-24	10-29	15	15	75		
Percentages: FG: 40.7%. FT: 75.0%. Three-point field goals: 7-27 (Tilly 0-6, Mobley 2-5, Thornton 2-4, Noel 1-3, Cupps 1-3, Bynum 0-3, White 0-2, Chatman 1-1). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 1 (Thornton). Turnovers: 4 (Thornton, Bynum, Njegovan, Chatman). Steals: 3 (Thornton 2, Cupps). Officials: Comer, Williams, Young. Attendance: 7,938.									

Ohio State 90, Bellarmine 33							
Nov. 13, 2024 Value City Arena • Columbus							
		1	2	3	4	F	
Bellarmine (1-2)		0	10	14	9	33	
Ohio State (2-0)		26	20	27	17	90	
Bellarmine	Total	FT	Reb.				
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Shropshire	19	1-7	1-2	1-2	0	4	4
Hyman	30	3-13	1-2	2-0	0	2	8
Ralston	27	2-6	2-6	0-3	0	3	7
Harris	30	1-7	0-0	0-0	3	1	2
Jamison	24	1-10	0-0	0-5	0	2	2
Smith	30	1-9	0-0	0-4	3	0	3
Abdel Aal	11	1-3	1-4	1-1	0	3	3
Sherrill	14	0-3	2-6	4-5	0	5	2
Chiquemba	15	1-2	0-0	1-0	0	0	2
Totals	200	11-60	7-20	11-25	6	20	33
Percentages: FG: 18.3%. FT: 35.0%. Three-point field goals: 4-19. (Henry 1-5, Smith 1-5, Jamison 0-4, Ralston 1-2, Harris 0-2, Hyman 1-1). Team rebounds: 7. Blocked shots: 1 (Jamison). Turnovers: 19 (Jamison 5, Ralston 4, Hyman 3, Shropshire 2, Smith 2, Harris, Smith, Sherrill). Steals: 5 (Hyman, Ralston, Harris, Smith, Sherrill)							
Ohio State	Total	FT	Reb.				
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Kitts	15	1-5	1-3	4-4	0	1	3
Lemmilä	13	2-5	0-0	2-3	1	0	4
Gray	17	5-11	2-2	1-4	1	0	14
K. Cambridge	15	0-3	2-4	3-3	2	3	2
J. Cambridge	16	6-12	6-6	1-7	2	2	18
Watson	21	4-9	1-2	1-5	3	0	11
Todd	19	3-6	2-2	1-2	1	4	8
Biriuk	25	5-11	2-2	0-1	0	3	15
Martin	23	2-7	0-0	1-2	4	1	4
Hobbs	20	3-3	0-0	2-8	1	3	7
Henry	16	1-3	2-2	2-5	1	2	4
Totals	200	32-75	18-23	19-46	16	19	90
Percentages: FG: 42.7%. FT: 78.3%. Three-point field goals: 8-34 (Biriuk 3-9, Gray 2-7, Watson 2-6, Todd 0-3, Martin 0-3, J. Cambridge 0-2, Hobbs 1-1, Lemmilä 0-1, K. Cambridge 0-1, Henry 0-1). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 4 (Henry 2, Kitts, K. Cambridge). Turnovers: 10 (Lemmila 2, Watson 2, Todd 2, Henry 2, K. Cambridge, Martin). Steals: 8 (K. Cambridge 3, Kitts, J. Cambridge, Watson, Todd, Hobbs). Officials: Kalei Enterline, Michol Murray, Kristie Watkins- Day. Attendance: 4,671							

Oh, Captain. McBrayer Proudly Wears Letter

Nathan McBrayer understands the responsibility that comes with playing for the Ohio State hockey team.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

Not only is the junior defenseman the only Ohioan on the 26-player roster, but the Dublin native is carrying the mantle for Columbus area hockey, having been developed in the Ohio AAA Blue Jackets program as a youth.

Added to that, he is the ninth player from the Buckeye state to be named captain since the inception of the program in 1963-64. The last to do so was another Dubliner, Austin Pooley, who was an alternate captain in 2020-21 and wore the captain's "C" the following season.

McBrayer, who is an alternate captain, was born at the Wexner Medical Center at Ohio State, started skating at age 3 at the OSU Ice Rink and attended many Buckeye hockey games.

He said being a captain is a dream come true.

"I've been thinking about being a leader

my whole life here and playing hockey here, and it's just a great honor that my teammates have the trust in me and they chose me to be one of those guys to lead them this year," he said. "Being someone that they can turn to, to talk to about anything, it's such a great honor, and I take it seriously."

He wants to set an example for local players, just as he became enamored watching the Buckeyes.

"It's awesome getting to wear a letter because for the younger kids growing up in Columbus, obviously there haven't been a ton of local guys that came through here," McBrayer said. "Hopefully they can see me and be like, 'Yeah, that's what I want to do, too. I'm going to play hockey at Ohio State and be a leader and help them achieve the ultimate goal of winning a championship here.'"

McBrayer, graduate forward Adam Eisele and junior forward Riley Thompson are alternates, while senior forward Davis Burnside is the 19th Buckeye to wear the "C" at least twice.

"Anytime you could get a letter, especially when your peers vote, it's a huge honor," Burnside said. "It's something that I don't take any more lightly than last year. If anything, it's more of an honor."

"I have a great group of captains with me, and we have a great group, and all 26 guys lead by example, so it makes your job pretty easy."

Newcomers Welcome

Eisele's selection might seem strange only for the fact that this is his first season with the Buckeyes after three at Minnesota State, but it's not out of the ordinary.

Defenseman Aiden Hansen-Bukata played four seasons for the Rochester Institute of Technology before transferring to Ohio State for the 2024-25 season and was voted an alternate.

Also, defenseman Will Riedell was a captain in 2021-22 after arriving from Lake Superior State.

"My guys have done a tremendous job, not only bringing good hockey players in but quality people," Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik said of his staff. "That's a testament to that. Some of these guys come in, and they've been here now for two months in the summer, and it's a credit for our group to put that vote in to say, 'Hey, I don't care if you're one year here, three years, four years.' If he's a really good leader, he should be part of that group, and that's what they said again this year."

Eisele spent most of the summer in Columbus training with his new teammates and was conscious of setting an example.

"I'm the kind that puts my head down and goes to work," he said. "I'll be the first one to do it, and if guys follow me, that's what I want to do, is have guys follow me into battle."

His surname was famous in Columbus in the 1960s when Donn Eisele was the command module pilot for the Apollo 7 mission. Adam said there is no relation as far as he knows.

However, there is a weird numerical connection. Apollo 7 was launched on Oct. 11, 1968. Adam Eisele scored his first goal for the Buckeyes on Oct. 11 vs. Northern Michigan.

Thompson is also a transfer, but he is in his second season following a freshman season at Alaska Anchorage.

"I definitely would like to show my leadership and express it on the ice," he said. "I like to lead by example, backing up my teammates where I can and just being a good player, obviously. I think it all comes together. And then off the ice, just creating a good example for practice, in the weight room and all that."

Not only must a captain have good communication with teammates, but he also needs to work with the officials.

"It's good to build that trust with them and just know where the line is," Thompson said.

That's where Burnside has an advantage as a repeat captain.

"You try to build relationships," he said. "You let them know where you stand, so in case there are situations that arise, you can talk to them."

"Like during warmups, go say hi to them. I have a lot of respect for them, and hopefully they have a lot of respect for me. So just being able to get to know them a little bit last year, hopefully I'll be able to build on that this year and have a good relationship with all of them."

Sometimes the captains have to be part cheerleader, part therapist.

The Buckeyes were off the weekend of Nov. 7-8 after being swept at home the previous weekend by No. 4 Penn State. There aren't many things worse for an athlete than having time to think about losses with no im-

mediate goal (games) in sight.

"Yeah, it sucks," Eisele said. "It was a real sour taste in our mouth after a couple of games where we know we shot ourselves in the foot."

That's why the captains were tasked with keeping spirits up and taking a positive stance heading into the series at No. 7 Wisconsin on Nov. 14-15.

"I think this last week, the group came together really tight, and now we're really excited to get on to Wisconsin," Eisele said on Nov. 12. "We told them to stick with it. We know we're a good team. I mean, we're at Ohio State. We're all good players, so we've just got to believe in ourselves and go do what we know we can do."

Rohlik expects that type of advice from his captains, but he also holds them to a higher standard. The Buckeyes took 16 penalties in the two games against Penn State. Six were by the captains.

"They've got to lead by example too," he said. "They can't be in the box, and they can't do some of the things that were happening. Everybody's eyes are on those guys, and they know it, and that's part of being a leader. If you want guys to follow, then you've got to do the right things."

Buckeye Pride

The Ohio captains for the Buckeyes:

McBrayer (Dublin, 2025-26)*, Pooley (Dublin, 2020-21*, 2021-22), Gordi Myer (Sylvania, 2019-20*), John Albert (Concord, 2010-11), Tommy Goebel (Parma, 2007-08*), Adam Smith (Bowling Green, 1994-95), Chuck Blooming (Parma, 1967-68*, 1968-69), Harold Cousino (Toledo, 1967-68), Roger Hartsock (Waynesville, 1963-65).

* - Alternate captain

Battling The Badgers

OSU rebounded from the Penn State series to take four of six Big Ten points from the Badgers in Madison, Wis., winning 5-1 before losing 6-5 in overtime on Nov. 14 and 15.

The captains backed their words with actions, combining for nine points (five goals, four assists) in the series.

Eisele had a goal and an assist in the opener and scored twice in the rematch, and Thompson had two assists to help the Buckeyes rally from 4-2 and 5-3 deficits. McBrayer tied it 5-5 with under eight minutes left in regulation, but the Badgers (8-2-2, 4-2-0 Big Ten) scored on the power play in overtime.

The Buckeyes (5-5-0, 1-3-0) got 30 saves from Kristoffer Eberly in the opener, Wisconsin native Max Montes scored and had an assist, and Burnside added an empty-net tally.

Next

Ohio State plays at Michigan on Nov. 21 and 22, 7 p.m. for each with the games on Big Ten Plus. They complete their November schedule at Arizona State Nov. 28 (5 p.m.) and 29 (7 p.m.).

Their next home games are Dec. 4 (7:30 p.m.) and 5 (6 p.m.) against Minnesota. Both are on BTN.

For a complete recap of the Wisconsin series, go to the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



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OSU Wrestlers Rolling Early in 2025 Season

Two weeks into the season, No. 4 Ohio State wasted no time announcing its intentions. The Buckeyes have strung together a blistering start in 2025-26, rolling through the Clarion Open with six total titles before overpowering Chattanooga 42-4 in their first dual of the year on Nov. 9.

ON THE MAT Sam Cipriani

Through the first two competitions, Ohio State featured seven starting wrestlers – Brendan McCrone (125 pounds), Ben Davino (133), Jesse Mendez (141), Paddy Gallagher (165), Dylan Fishback (184), Luke Geog (197), and Nick Feldman (heavyweight) – with perfect records. Of those seven wrestlers the six Buckeyes who entered the Clarion Open on Nov. 2 came away with a title.

Mendez did not enter and instead took home a victory at the 2025 NWCA All-Star Classic the day prior, beating the No. 6 wrestler in the country at 141 pounds, Iowa State's Anthony Echemendia, by decision, 7-3.

Mendez defeated Echemendia at Jersey Mike's Arena in Piscataway, N.J., the second time the OSU senior defeated the former Buckeye after besting Echemendia 6-4 in the 2024 NCAA semifinals.

This time when the two faced off, following a scoreless first frame, Mendez jumped out to a 4-0 start on a takedown and escape before cruising to a victory with tough defense and another takedown in the third period.

Despite Ohio State's hot start to the season, Buckeye head coach Tom Ryan said the team's performance against the Mocs showed both promise and areas for growth.

"(Against Chattanooga), there was a lot of good. There's always learning, but there was a lot of good," Ryan said. "The team looked aggressive. We looked sharp, but not up and down the lineup. There were a couple of guys that didn't have a great performance. It's not as much about winning and losing. Of course, we know the end goal is to win, but it's really about the performance. How clean was it? So overall, we're off to a good start."

Ohio State saw its first true test at the 2025 National Duals Invitational, where the Buckeyes faced Wyoming, No. 10 Minnesota, No. 2 Nebraska and No. 34 Iowa on the mat Nov. 15-16. The Buckeyes dominated each of their four matchups, making a statement to the college wrestling world. Ohio State opened its weekend with a 33-6 victory over Wyoming and a 29-6 win over Minnesota on Nov. 15.

On day two of the invitational, Ohio State would have two of the top three teams in the nation in its path in Nebraska and Iowa. The Buckeyes steamrolled the Cornhuskers 33-3 as nine of its 10 wrestlers won their bouts in the dual, including three major decisions in victories from Da-

vino, Gallagher and 157-pounder Brandon Cannon.

Then, against Iowa in the championship, Ohio State won its first five matchups, building a 21-0 lead that the Hawkeyes could never come back from. Despite three-straight 4-1 sudden-victory wins and a win by decision at 197 pounds, Ohio State had built up an insurmountable lead and Iowa forfeited its heavyweight contest to give the Buckeyes a 27-12 win and the 2025 National Duals Invitational crown.

Starters Undecided At Multiple Weights

Despite Ohio State's 10-man group having success in Chattanooga, Ryan said that with the Buckeyes' season still in its early stages, he is far from deciding who will be in the final lineup.

"There's still a lot of competition at most weight classes," Ryan said. "To be honest, I would say that 125 pounds we're watching closely. We're still evaluating our wrestlers at 165 pounds. Even the 184- and 197-pound groups are weight classes we're watching."

At 125 pounds, Ohio State is stacked with talented wrestlers, including juniors McCrone and Nic Bouzakis, as well as sophomore Vinny Kilkeary.

McCrone, a two-time NCAA tournament qualifier, has shown himself to be the best of the strong trio, though not by much. The Willoughby, Ohio, native took down Bouzakis in a tight 5-4 decision at the Clarion Open, which earned him a start for a 4-2 victory over Chattanooga's Ty Tice in the Buckeyes' dual with the Mocs.

Ryan noted that while Bouzakis came to Ohio State as the more highly touted recruit, McCrone's sheer effort has allowed him to rise above the group.

"Nic's dropped down to 125 and has been on five United States world teams. He came in with a higher pedigree, not potential, than McCrone," Ryan said. "McCrone has done a fantastic job. His work ethic is incredible. He has love for the sport and our team. McCrone stands for everything that we want our guys to stand for."

Although McCrone has appeared to be a cut above Bouzakis and Kilkeary so far, Ryan said Ohio State will continue to rotate wrestlers at the 125-pound weight class, allowing the competition to play out until a clear starter emerges.

"They wrestled two weeks ago, and McCrone won a close match, so we'll just continue to use them both," Ryan said. "We'll use them both, and ultimately, through the course of this year, we're hoping that one of them gives us some clarity on who we should go with. And right now we don't have that clarity."

According to Ryan, the 165-pound group is in a similar situation. Senior Paddy Gallagher dominated at the Clarion Open with a 5-0 record, though e'Than Birden and T.J. Schierl have come on strong in recent weeks.

Schierl is coming off a solid showing at the Michigan State Open, while Birden faltered late and dropped his final two matches.

Ryan said Birden's inconsistency is what has kept him from making a real push for a starting spot.

"e'Than Birden is a very good wrestler," Ryan said. "But what we're looking for as a staff is consistency. We're looking for someone that week in and week out gives a performance that builds trust that in the toughest times or circumstances you can depend on this particular person, quite frankly, a little more than another one."

At 184 pounds, Fishback has blown ahead of the pack. The NC State transfer steamrolled through his first five matches, winning all five – three by technical fall – capped by a 21-5 victory over Air Force's Brian Burburija to claim the 184-pound Clarion Open title.

While freshman Carson Mize has been solid in his first season with the Buckeyes, he has yet to reach the All-America level Fishback has already demonstrated. After two outings, it's becoming clear that Fishback is poised to be Ohio State's go-to wrestler at 184 pounds.

Ohio State's 197-pound group is also uber-talented with multiple starting options. Geog has shown to be the top dog of the weight class, jumping out to a perfect 6-0 record, including a win in the Clarion Open final against teammate Ryder Rogotzke.

The victory in the championship earned Geog the start against Chattanooga, and the third-year Buckeye responded with a 16-12 victory over the Mocs' Kade Rule. However, Ryan was not impressed with the performance as Geog let up late and allowed Rule to come back from a 15-2 deficit.

Geog's competition at 197 pounds is the Buckeyes' 2024-25 starter, Seth Shumate, who took Geog's place when he suffered a season-ending injury last season. After a shaky 2-2 start at the Clarion Open, the red-shirt junior bounced back and took home first place at the Michigan State Open.

Ryan said he's encouraged by the depth at 197 pounds but stressed that consistency will ultimately determine who earns the job, noting that none of Shumate, Geog nor Rogotzke has displayed that level early in the season.

"Luke looked really good early on and then he didn't, and then Shumate went to Michigan State and won the open," Ryan said. "So we're watching and not making any decisions too early. Those weights are still up for grabs."

With a long season still awaiting the Buckeyes, Ryan said he will continue

searching for signs of Ohio State's culture while shaping the team's starting 10-man lineup.

"We have 16 dates throughout the year, and every date is about learning progress and self-assessment, and the standard is always aggression," Ryan said.

Bucks Down Roster Win MSU Open

Many Buckeye grapplers wrestled at the Michigan State Open, with Kilkeary and Shumate taking home titles in the 125-pound and 197-pound weight classes, respectively.

Ohio State had nine wrestlers entered in the Michigan State Open on Nov. 8.

Both Kilkeary and Shumate finished 2-2 at the Clarion Open, with teammates McCrone and Geog taking home the crown at those events, before both had three straight wins apiece to win titles at Michigan State.

Schierl, Patrick Downing, and Birden also made appearances at the event at 165 pounds. The sophomore Schierl was the most successful of the trio, finishing with a 4-1 record and a third-place finish. Downing, who has yet to win in 2025, losing in all four of his matchups this season, fell in both of his contests on Nov. 8. Birden had inconsistency issues during the open, winning his first two matches, before dropping his final two on his way to a sixth-place finish.

Dakota King, Mize and Brogan Fielding each participated in the freshman/sophomore division at the Michigan State Open. King earned a 4-2 record in the 133-pound weight class on his way to fourth place. Both Mize and Fielding were 2-2 at the tournament, with Mize finishing fourth at 184 pounds, while Fielding ended his day in fifth at 141 pounds.

What's Next On The Schedule

Following its trip to Tulsa, Okla., for the 2025 National Duals Invitational, the Buckeyes were scheduled off for just four days before returning to the mat in Columbus.

Before BSB next goes to press, the Buckeyes were set to host Kent State (1-1) at 7 p.m. on Nov. 20 at the Covelli Center. The Golden Flashes returned from their first weekend of head-to-head wrestling when Kent State defeated Mount Union 49-0, and lost to Virginia 27-6.

Ohio State and Kent State's dual will be broadcast on B1G+.

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Ohio State Getting Odd Amount Of Disrespect

It is undeniable that Ohio State has some of the richest history in the world of college football. No matter what your measurement, the Buckeyes are at or near the top.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

All-time winning percentage – first. All-time wins – second. All-America selections – second. First-round draft picks – first. And on and on and on.

You cannot talk about college football without mentioning Ohio State.

So it's a bit strange that for the last few weeks, national media types have been blathering on about whether OSU is worthy of being the No. 1 team in the nation. Yes, you read that right. The Buckeyes, winners of 14 straight contests and holders of the most recent national championship, are being questioned. Why? Because they are "boring." Because they "have not been tested." Because they have not "faced adversity."

Are you kidding me? Now don't get it wrong. Ohio State should not be held in high regard simply because it is royalty. Not at all.

The Buckeyes should be lauded because they are the only team this season to not have anything resembling a hiccup. And it was business as usual for OSU as it rolled past visiting UCLA.

People who should know better have used this line of thinking to advance whatever narrative is in favor, forgetting momentarily that Ohio State is one of the bluest of blue bloods in the sport. It's not as if the Buckeyes are new kids in town the way, say, Georgia or Oregon are. The

very fabric of the sport is dyed with scarlet and gray.

Not only has the team been questioned, but so has quarterback Julian Sayin. The nation's leader in passing efficiency and completion percentage (over 80 percent, which is on pace to set an NCAA single-season record) has been on a number of Heisman Trophy lists, as he should be. But he isn't at the top as he should be.

It's not as if Sayin has come out of nowhere. He was a five-star high school prospect who signed with Alabama out of high school in Carlsbad, Calif., and he was in Tuscaloosa for a few weeks before transferring to Ohio State after Nick Saban retired.



Julian Sayin

So if he had the kudos from the analysts, and he had a pedigree that was good enough for Saban, why is he not the main man on the minds of analysts who supposedly watch the sport? You have to wonder if he

would be questioned in this manner had he stayed with the Crimson Tide.

Click the remote and it won't take long to see that Sayin has the goods to lead the Buckeyes to the national title and to take home the Heisman. Watch his footwork, how effortlessly he steps up in the pocket and resets before firing a laser to his cadre of standout receivers. His poise is well beyond that of the typical first-year starter, and his release is among the quickest in the game.

So why isn't he atop every Heisman board?

For the same silly reasons that some have questioned the Buckeyes being at the top of the rankings. Sayin hasn't been tested enough, has not really faced a crucible that he had to overcome. He hasn't had a "Heisman Moment," which seems to be a prerequisite these days.

Analysts salivated about the game-winning pass Indiana's Fernando Mendoza made late in the game to beat Penn State and were effusive in praise for Texas A&M's Marcel Reed after he led the Aggies back from a 30-3 deficit to beat South Carolina. Never mind that both quarterbacks created the deficits they then climbed out of with poor or average play in the first half. Why should that be rewarded?

Sayin and the Buckeyes cannot control that they have simply been, to this point, better than everyone else. Whether against Texas or Minnesota or UCLA, completing 80 percent of your passes is no easy feat. Observers and voters should not penalize Ohio State arbitrarily simply because it has not been challenged.

Barring a meltdown of Chernobyl proportions, Sayin will be in New York City as a finalist for the Heisman, and the Buckeyes will be in the Big Ten Championship Game and a high seed in the College Football Playoff. Even on a night when Sayin was missing his fastball and his top two receivers (Carnell Tate was out, Jeremiah

Smith played three series), he still managed to complete 74.2 percent of his passes. It says something about just how good he's been that a night anyone would gladly take felt like a subpar showing.

Should the young man and the team continue to play as they have, the hope from this corner of the college football world is that the doubts and questions disappear and that they get as their works deserve.

Cause For Concern?

The adversity mentioned above has not really hit Ohio State yet, though it could be lurking right around the corner.

Tate missed a second straight game, and Smith was on a pitch count after reportedly coming up with an ankle injury during the week. He played in the first half and even made a breathtaking catch near the sideline that will go into an already bursting highlights folder.

It allowed the Buckeyes to get some experience for younger receivers such as Mylan Graham and Quincy Porter and to give more of a spotlight to Brandon Inniss, who, to his credit, thrived.

The offense did not look quite as smooth as it does with Smith and Tate in the lineup, and that makes sense when you figure out how much gravitational pull Smith has on defenses. And Tate is maybe the best No. 2 receiver in America. Without the two of them on the field, UCLA was able to dial up the pressure and make Sayin a bit uncomfortable. He did not make any truly poor throws but was not as sharp as usual.

Ryan Day said in the postgame that he was not concerned about whether Smith's injury was anything long-term, though he has not always been the most truthful or forthcoming regarding injuries. The belief around the OSU beat is that Tate could be back for Rutgers and that Smith may be rested. Truth be told, neither is truly needed for the Buckeyes to beat Rutgers, but you do want to have some momentum heading into the rivalry game the following weekend.

The Buckeye ground game has really picked up steam, with freshmen Bo Jackson and Isaiah West both looking more like veterans, and veteran James Peoples looked rejuvenated against the Bruins, even making ESPN's Top Plays after hurdling a Bruins defender on the way to a late first-half touchdown. UCLA entered the game among the bottom 10 teams in college football in defending the run (5.03 yards per carry), and the Scarlet Knights are at the absolute bottom in that category, allowing 6.55 yards per carry with 18 touchdowns. That has to gall Greg Schiano, but he may not be able to do anything about it.

Were I making the money that Ryan Day is making – and if that was the case, I would be sitting on a beach someplace rather than writing this column – I would lean into the ground game against Rutgers and keep Smith and Tate on the sideline.

Doing It With Styles

Ohio State's special teams have been

a source of frustration for much of Day's



Lorenzo Styles Jr.

tenure, with fans wondering why the Buckeyes cannot have an explosive return game or a punter who instills fear into opposing hearts.

So it was nice to see the jolt provided by Lorenzo Styles Jr. when he returned a kickoff 100 yards for a score against UCLA.

Most of the guys on this team were barely in kindergarten the last time it happened, with Jordan Hall bringing one back against Michigan in 2010. Going back even farther, Ted Ginn Jr. was the last OSU player to have a kickoff return of 100 yards or more, doing it in 2005 against Minnesota.

The Next Reese?

Most are focused on the current Buckeyes, but one future Buckeye stuffed the stat sheet in a recent Ohio state playoff game.

Linebacker Cincere Johnson made an almost unbelievable 25 tackles, with six TFLs, two sacks and a pass breakup in Cleveland Glenville's win over Cincinnati Princeton on Nov. 14. Glenville is, of course, the prep stomping grounds of Arvell Reese, and Johnson looks like he wants to be the next great one in the long lineage of Tarblooders at Ohio State.

Crunch Time

The final two weekends of the regular season are upon us, which means rivalry games and jockeying for position in conference races. In the Big Ten, it is certainly looking like an imminent showdown between Ohio State and Indiana, two of the three remaining unbeaten in college football. The SEC looks to be down to Texas A&M and either Georgia or Alabama, while the Big 12 is just about locked on Texas Tech and BYU. The ACC is a complete mess and too much of a headache to diagnose.

There was not a ton of movement in this week's Dandy Dozen as there were few upsets. One notable exception was Alabama falling at home to Oklahoma, which does not knock the Crimson Tide out of the CFP but does hurt their chances of getting a top-four seed and first-round bye.

Dandy Dozen

1. Ohio State (10-0)
2. Indiana (11-0)
3. Texas A&M (10-0)
4. Georgia (9-1)
5. Ole Miss (10-1)
6. Texas Tech (10-1)
7. Oregon (9-1)
8. BYU (9-1)
9. Oklahoma (8-2)
10. Alabama (8-2)
11. Vanderbilt (8-2)
12. Notre Dame (8-2)

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Is There A Day When Starters Exit Early?

I am one of Ryan Day's biggest fans. Unless you are one of those pessimistic Buckeye fans who find something to criticize in just about everything, how can you not be a fan? Day has helped extend a golden age of Ohio State football.

But I have one beef with the national champion coach, and I have been consistent about that beef, dating back to his days as an assistant coach under Urban Meyer. Most of you already know what it is. In blowouts, of which the Buckeyes are involved in many, I believe he leaves the starters, especially the quarterback, in too long.

Throughout this season, it seems like Day and his staff's master plan is to get better every week and have the team peak physically and mentally at the end of the season – for the Michigan game, the Big Ten Championship Game and the CFP. Part of the process is having the team as injury-free as possible – difficult in a rough and tumble sport like football – when the big games finally arrive.

Against UCLA, Day appeared unhappy when his team did not come out of the locker room after halftime looking particularly crisp in a game they were already leading 27-0, and he left many of the starters – including franchise quarterback Julian Sayin – out there. I get why he was unhappy and what he was trying to accomplish. But if the whole master plan is to peak at the right time, why risk losing Sayin – or any other topline player for that matter? But especially Sayin.

I found it ironic that one of the reasons the Buckeyes were struggling at that moment was right out in front of 104,168 people in Ohio Stadium. Ohio State was playing without their other two top offensive players – Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate. That's a tough handicap for even Sayin to overcome. What would it be like if the Buckeyes had to go into battle without their star quarterback?

Did anyone besides me think that when Sayin was briefly shaken up in the first quarter after a particularly hard hit, it would have been a great time to insert Lincoln Kienholz for some action while the game was actually still being contested? Ohio State was leading 10-0 at the time after a Jayden Fielding field goal. If Sayin proved OK, which he did, he could have come back in after a series or two, enough to make sure he was really all right and get Kienholz some extra experience in preparation for the unthinkable.

Instead, Kienholz ultimately came in with 8:49 to play in the game – earlier than he is frequently called on – and the Buckeyes leading 41-10. I thought he looked sharp, completing all three of his passes for 34 yards, including a 15-yard strike to Nate Roberts. He marched his team 75 yards on 11 plays for their final points on an 8-yard run by James Peoples.

The object of each season is to beat Michigan, win the conference championship and win the national championship. None of those would be easy tasks without Sayin. As far as continuing to get work for the players, the Buckeyes probably get better work every day in practice against their championship-caliber teammates than they would get against UCLA.

I guess you could say that Kienholz gets tested by the Buckeye defense in practice, as well.

I think we are getting to the point where Sayin has gotten better virtually every week. He is a Heisman Trophy candidate. What is more important at this point in the season – more work against hapless competition or a healthy Sayin for the stretch drive?

Sayin's Upside

I listen to WLW radio out of Cincinnati a lot. The talk on the station recently has centered

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

on the Cincinnati Bengals' star quarterback and former Buckeye Joe Burrow, who is returning to practice after a lengthy toe injury rehab. The talk of Burrow got me thinking about Sayin and where he is at this point in his career vis-a-vis Burrow, one of the greatest college quarterbacks of all time.

While Sayin is posting Heisman-type numbers in his redshirt-freshman season, Burrow was serving as an understudy to J.T. Barrett in his redshirt-freshman year while battling with Dwayne Haskins for the position of Barrett's heir apparent.

In his limited action in 2016, he had Sayin-like numbers. Burrow was 22 of 28 for a 78.6 completion percentage and two touchdowns without a pick. Advantage Sayin on experience alone. In 2017, Burrow suffered a broken hand and saw little action, completing just 7 of 11 passes, paving the way for Haskins to secure the inside track at replacing Barrett and paving the way for Burrow to head to LSU, where he became the starter in 2018.

Here's where the season for Burrow that many forget about comes into play, and it shows a major edge for Sayin in comparison between the two quarterbacks.

In Burrow's junior year, he was 219 of 379 for 2,894 yards and a 57.8 completion percentage with 16 touchdowns against five interceptions. A solid campaign, but one that pales in comparison to the season Sayin is putting together.

For Burrow, the rest, as they say, is history.

As a senior he completed 402 of 527 passes for a 76.3 completion percentage, 5,671 yards and 60 touchdowns against only six interceptions. Many have called it the greatest season by a college quarterback of all time. Burrow won the Heisman Trophy and led LSU to the national championship. In the two-game CFP, he averaged 478 yards passing per game and had 12 total passing touchdowns, and he also ran for two touchdowns.

My point is that if Sayin is this far ahead of where Burrow was at a similar point in his career and Burrow ultimately grew into one of the greatest ever, where might Sayin be when his time at Ohio State is over, which sadly may be after next season?

What's Up With Hartline

In the last few days, several people have expressed concern to me that Ohio State offensive coordinator Brian Hartline is going to leave to take the Penn State job vacated by the deposed James Franklin and wondered what I thought about that.

If Hartline invited me over to ride ATVs, I'd ask him about it. But so far I haven't been, so basically my knowledge of the situation is no greater than yours. I think the first question is whether Penn State wants to go with a coach – albeit one of the best assistant coaches ever – who has no head coaching experience.

By firing Franklin in the middle of the season, the brass at Penn State have really put themselves in the position of having to get their decision right. There are many great coaches out there with proven track records as head coaches, several of whom have also been recently fired. Do they want to roll the dice?

Then there is the question of whether Hartline wants to even leave right now – for any head coaching job. People have asked me, so here is my opinion about Hartline's options.

If he wants to be a head coach, the Penn State job would certainly be an attractive one for a Big Ten and Midwest guy – if they offer. Or maybe he wants to ultimately be a head coach but would like to wait until Day retires and vie for the Ohio State job. In the meantime, he can prove his ability as a coordinator and play-caller.

Or, in today's complicated world of NIL, the portal, revenue sharing, etc., maybe he would rather skip the hassle and just be an assistant football coach. Hartline's fellow Ohio State assistant, Larry Johnson, has been an assistant at big-time schools Penn State and Ohio State since 1996, nearly 30 years, and seems perfectly content. Some people just don't want the hassle of being a head coach. When Johnson first came here, I thought he was underpaid compared to some of the other assistants, but that seems to have been worked out, for Johnson as well as Hartline.

It does seem like Hartline has options, now and in the future. Right now, I am going to sit back and enjoy the incredible job he is doing as an assistant coach.

If he invites me over to do some off-road riding, I'll ask him about his future and let you know what he has to say.

Others Less Patient

A few recent Ohio State assistants who were less patient than Hartline and quickly parlayed their success at OSU into head jobs come to mind.

Tom Herman was offensive coordinator under Meyer from 2012-14. After winning the national championship in 2014, he took the head coaching job at Houston and then advanced to the head job at Texas. He was fired from there after four seasons, went to Florida Atlantic and was ultimately fired there after less than two seasons.

Chris Ash was also on that 2014 championship coaching staff. He parlayed that championship into the head job at Rutgers, where he was fired after less than four seasons.

And Jeff Hafley parlayed one solid year as defensive coordinator under Day in 2019 into the head coaching job at Boston College. In four seasons he never won more than seven games, and he posted a 22-26 record before resigning and joining the Green Bay Packers as an assistant in the NFL.

With the money that Ohio State is paying assistants these days, the grass isn't always greener as a head coach.

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Those who are mailing their payment need to act quickly to be upgraded for Michigan week.

Readers need to consider their typical delivery time and remember that during the week of the Michigan game there will be a postal

holiday on Thanksgiving, two days before The Game, which has a noon kick. Getting your BSB to you before the game will be difficult under any circumstances, but your best bet is with first-class mail.

This is one I can't blame the post office for. Thanksgiving is Thanksgiving, one of my late mother's favorite holidays. All of us, including postal workers, should be with our families, including members of the Ohio State football team.

Blame the football schedulers.

Delivering Before The Game

Speaking of when BSB readers will get their Michigan issues, there is what I think is a really interesting story about Ryan Day, the Buckeyes and The Game (see pages 16-17) in this BSB. The story really belongs in our next issue, the Michigan Preview issue, but we made the decision to put it in this issue because so many of our readers will not receive their Michigan Preview before the game, potentially rendering the story outdated. Regardless of when you read the article, written by our Bobby Gorbett, I hope you find it as interesting as I did.

While comparing Day's struggles against Michigan to those of John Cooper, Doug Lesmerises of the "Bill and Doug on Ohio State Football" Substack, seems to understand how felt I about the thrill of winning the national championship last season – in impressive fashion – but how that championship did not erase the pain for me of the embarrassing loss to a lowly Michigan team. In fact, winning the championship made the loss in The Game that much more painful for me because it proved how much better those 2024 Buckeyes were than their rivals.

"There are two paths now," Lesmerises said of how Ohio State can have a successful season. "Beating Michigan is one path, and winning the national championship is another path. Back in the old days, they were the same path, because how could you have ever won the national championship if you didn't win the Ohio State vs. Michigan game? You practically had to be undefeated to win the national championship, or maybe have one loss, but you weren't going to lose your last game of the regular season and then go on and win the national championship. Now you can, and Ohio State did it last year.

"The idea and the debate (of) what matters more, beating Michigan or winning the national championship? And the actual answer is, they both matter the most. Before they were the same, and now they're not the same. Now there are two (different) paths. To me, in this world, at least one of the paths has to be going well. They won on the other path, and so that doesn't mean that the Michigan path doesn't matter, but it takes a little bit of the pressure off of it."

To me, this season, taking the "path" of defeating the Wolverines is mandatory. The path of repeating as national champion is difficult, regardless of how good this Ohio State team is. There are a lot of good teams out there, and there are a lot of games to play and win. Stumble in the postseason after you have already lost to Michigan, and your mulligan is gone.

Beat Michigan and snap the four-game losing streak, make a decent run in the postseason and the Buckeyes have had a pretty good season by most people's definition – certainly mine.

Regular readers of this column please note that I believe this is the first time this season I have mentioned my aversion to losing to Michigan again, as compared to last year when I kept bringing it up ad nauseam.



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