

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 45, No. 11

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Nov. 29, 2025

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Not a single Rutgers player had made it into the visiting tunnel before Ohio State fans were singing in unison.

Students in the Block "O" south stands had their arms around each other, belting, "We don't give a damn for the whole state of Michigan," and as they made it a few bars into the song, fans around the rest of the stadium joined in.

It's clear that the rivalry means as much as it ever has to the people watching the games.

Despite four straight losses, head coach Ryan Day isn't backing down from what this game means to the program, and he said that the Buckeyes' full attention turned to Michigan very quickly after the 42-9 win over Rutgers on Nov. 22.

"They're always on the back of our mind in terms of what we're working towards," Day said. "We know this is the last game of the year and what it means to everybody here. It didn't take long in the fourth quarter, once the game was in hand, for everybody to start figuring out this thing's coming fast. There was just a good look in everyone's eyes in the locker room."

Day has been here before.

Going into the final week of the regular season, the Buckeyes, for all intents and purposes, have a spot in the College Football Playoff secured.

Last season, they proved that, even with a loss to archrival Michigan, the Buckeyes can still go on to win a national championship, and that is still an extremely realistic possibility this year as well.

But that doesn't mean that this game doesn't matter to the head coach.

The focus this season for Ohio State, since beating Texas in Week 1, has been trying to get into a comfortable weekly routine and treating each game as if it's the most important game OSU will play in. Throughout the year, Day has emphasized how important that routine is to this team.

"You have heard us really focusing on the process, because it's easy to just say, 'I want to get to the last game of the year,' but if that happens, you can get distracted, you can get upset, and all of a sudden your season can take a bad turn," Day said after beating the Scarlet Knights. "I feel like we've focused on

Into The Fire

**BSB'S 2025
MICHIGAN
MEMORIES
ISSUE**



OSU Ready To End Four-Game Losing Streak To Wolverines

SONNY BROCKWAY

PRELIMINARIES OVER — Virtually untested since the season opener against Texas, top-ranked Ohio State vanquished Rutgers 42-9 in Ohio Stadium on Nov. 22 to run its record to 11-0. Next stop for the defending national champion is a trip to Ann Arbor on Nov. 29 to play the No. 15 Wolverines, knowing a victory puts the Buckeyes in the Big Ten Championship Game.

us. I feel like we've been consistent in our approach. But that's all in preparation for this week, so we have to continue to do that very thing."

At the end of October, when the Buckeyes were in their second idle week, it became obvious why this was the messaging throughout the entire year.

Each year, the football team welcomes the marching band into the Woody Hayes Athletic Center for a practice, which usually takes place during the lead-up to the game against the Wolverines. This year, Day made sure the band came during that off week, bringing the band in on Oct. 22.

"Certainly, we appreciate the band and everything they do," Day said in early November. "It's just an effort to make sure we can keep things as consistent as we possibly can, because that's really what the fo-

cus is."

Multiple years ago, Day made the decision to push Senior Tackle, a tradition that also usually takes place the week of The Game, to the postseason.

That was an earlier look into Day's approach of trying to make Ohio State's routine as consistent as possible, but anyone who watches college football knows that this game is not routine.

Both teams proved that much last year when the unranked Wolverines came to Columbus to hand Day his only loss ever to an unranked team, despite the fact that Ohio

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From The Message Board

It's officially rivalry week. Ohio State has lost four straight against the Wolverines and hopes to end that streak in Ann Arbor on Nov. 29. We asked subscribers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum what their thoughts are on how the game will go, and what will be the keys to beating Michigan and avoiding a fifth straight loss.

"If Smith and Tate don't play, they won't win."
— **Tiffin Buckeye**

"I don't expect the game to be close, but there have been so many upsets in the past 90 years that you never know. Ohio State won't lose unless they play their worst game of the season, and Michigan plays their best game of the season. In The Game, there have been bigger upsets, see 2024. And 1969!"
— **Terrier Buck**

"I look for the Buckeyes to perform with a balanced offensive attack with all hands on deck, and a stingy defense, and break the winless streak to earn the gold pants. Our best players will need to play their absolute best for this game, and I believe they will. No way that Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate sit it out. If perchance we didn't win, of course, it would bother me, but in today's college football landscape, it isn't fatal like it was before."
— **Bob Cody**

"This game will be a battle ... as usual. Our offense is methodical. It also has big-play potential. Stay within yourselves. On defense, just get after (Michigan quarterback Bryce) Underwood and force mistakes. Don't let them run off tackle. Patricia will put a great game plan together to bring us home. OSU 27, Them 20. GO BUCKS!!"
— **John Lanning**

"Chip Kelly is gone, so the play calling will be much, much better. This isn't John Cooper. This is Ryan Day. Bucks win big."
— **R1TBDBITL**

"I'd feel like the saddest country western song ever if we lost to TTUN. TTUN will notch up their mediocre playing for us; it will be like two teams on roids. It'll be a hair-pullin' battle. There will be blood. The Bucks will win because good triumphs over evil. Sometimes. Go Bucks!"
— **PeyoteBuck**

Buckeye Leaves

Ohio State heads into rivalry week after taking down Rutgers 42-9 at Ohio Stadium on Nov. 22 without wide receivers Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate. 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 stepping up with a career day in the absence of star wide receivers Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate, I'm giving my Buckeye Leaf to tight end Max Klare. The junior pass-catcher hauled in a season-high seven catches for 105 yards and a score.

Throughout Ohio State's win over Rutgers, Klare often acted as a safety net for quarterbacks Julian Sayin and Lincoln Kienholz. Klare also recorded Ohio State's two longest receptions of the day. He first caught a 39-yard pass on a crossing route in the second quarter before bringing down a 25-yard pass on a similar route a quarter later.

Klare's 105-yard outing marked the tight end's second time eclipsing the century mark in his career.

Bobby Gorbett, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf is going to senior defensive end Caden Curry, who consistently created havoc in Rutgers' backfield. Curry finished the game with a team-high six total tackles, which included two sacks.

Curry, who leads Ohio State in sacks for the season, made his biggest play during the third quarter of the game. Curry's impact play came on a second-and-9 situation, when he flew around the edge and made contact with Rutgers quarterback Athan Kaliakmanis right as he was about to pass the ball.

Curry dislodged the ball and hopped on the fumble that he forced to give the offense possession at the 1-yard line.

Greg Wilson, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf is going to freshman running back Bo Jackson, who did exactly what he was supposed to against the worst rushing defense in the country. Rutgers was giving up 6.5 yards per rush heading into this game, and Jackson didn't quite reach that mark, but he ran for 110

yards on 19 attempts for 5.8 yards per carry.

He also had two rushing touchdowns in the win, further solidifying his role as the No. 1 option in the run game for the Buckeyes.

With the schedule coming up for Ohio State, it was a much-needed good showing in the run game that has to give some confidence going into the final week of the regular season.

BSB Subscribers

John Lanning: This is a very good team, and I know there is a big game coming up. Because of this, I felt the offense was off a bit. 42-9 is great, but still off a bit. My leaves go to:

1. Max Klare, the key target for this game. Well done.
 2. Caden Curry really disrupted Rutgers' rhythm. Getting ready for TTUN.
 3. Bo Jackson for rushing for 110 yards. I like this freshman.
- Let's be able to say the same next week. GO BUCKS!!

R1TBDBITL: A leaf for Ryan Day as he got a lot of lesser-known seniors into the game.

PeyoteBuck: Bo Jackson did some serious grunt work. Max Klare is a rising star. Caden Curry was in a hurry. Give them all leaves.

Tiffin Buckeye: Max Klare and Caden Curry.

Bob Cody: Buckeye Leaves for all the seniors, and also those playing their last game in the Horseshoe. Winning 11 games going into The Game is a big accomplishment in any event.

Also earning leaves were Bo Jackson, with two TDs, Caden Curry with a strip-sack, James Peoples and Brandon Inniss, who overcame the potentially disastrous pass on the kick return, and Caleb Downs with the sack!

The Styles brothers – Lorenzo and Sonny – Max Klare, who stepped up and had a big day! CJ Donaldson Jr., back with a TD. Julian Sayin, a tougher game passing without the superstar WRs, but still very good. Jayden Fielding, true with every kick this season.

Terrier Buck: Did Adolph get his first two receptions of his career on Senior Day?

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PUBLISHER
Frank Moskowitz

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER
Becky Roberts

EDITOR
Greg Wilson

MANAGING EDITOR EMERITUS
Mark Rea

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER EMERITUS
Karen Wachsman 1944-1999

PHOTOGRAPHY
Sonny Brockway Terry Gilliam
Kevin Dye Josh Winslow

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

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES
Paula Serra Ron Friedman

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No. 3	Sept. 27	No. 15	TBA
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No. 6	Oct. 18	No. 18	March 21
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No. 11	Nov. 29	No. 23	July
No. 12	Dec. 6	No. 24	August

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Has Day Learned His Rivalry Lesson?

I stay away from social media as much as I can, but it becomes increasingly difficult with each passing day. Hot takes on everything from show business and politics to the latest weight loss tips appear ad nauseam morning, noon and night on my computer screen and smartphone.

Sports is not immune, either, and that has only ratcheted up several notches as the end of the college football regular season approaches. Some are amusing such as, “Indiana has two good seasons since World War II and suddenly they think they’re Alabama,” and “If Ohio State had to play Georgia’s schedule, they’d be the Rutgers of the SEC.”

Then there are the incessant playoff projections with Ohio State as the No. 1 seed and Indiana at No. 2. With those two teams favored to play one another in the Big Ten Championship Game, I can say with a relative amount of certainty the loser of that game will not retain top-two status.

Of course, you could fill a library with the off-the-cuff comments made regarding the upcoming Ohio State-Michigan game. Some are entertaining, most are ridiculous and a couple are downright moronic courtesy of blabbering bobbleheads who have somehow built multi-million-dollar social media presences despite having no more intelligence than a tick on the south end of a northbound dog.

Apparently, the prevailing thought among these Internet trolls (who give actual trolls a bad name) is that a two-loss Michigan team is more battle-tested than top-ranked Ohio State, which owns the nation’s longest winning streak among all Football Bowl Subdivision teams at 15.

According to these meatheads, the Wolverines have used road losses at Oklahoma and USC as well as close calls against Nebraska, Purdue and Northwestern to identify and address their own weaknesses. Never mind that Oklahoma threw for 270 yards during a 24-13 win in early September, USC went for 265 through the air during a 31-13 victory in mid-October, and the Cornhuskers, Boilermakers and Wildcats were a collective 8-16 in conference play heading into the final week of the regular season.

Michigan fans have several other talking points to underscore their confidence. Their favorite team has won 20 of its last 21 games at home, hasn’t lost to Ohio State in nearly 2,200 days, and put a huge smudge on the Buckeyes’ national championship trophy last year with a 13-10 victory in Columbus. OSU might be without top receivers Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate, Julian Sayin has been playing more the last couple of weeks like the redshirt freshman that he is, and Ryan Day is the sideline reincarnation of John Cooper, whose 2-10-1 record in the rivalry still defies logic.

Logic, however, is not what defines the Ohio State-Michigan rivalry.

Since The Associated Press began ranking college football teams in 1936, the higher-ranked team entering The Game has been successful only about 62 percent of the time. The Wolverines are 20-12-3 when they are the higher ranked team while the Buckeyes are 27-16-1. Four of Ohio State’s losses on that ledger have come during each of the last four years, the longest streak for the underdog since 1993 to 1996.

How long can Michigan continue to play the spoiler role? Perhaps as long as Day allows himself to fall into the trap of trying to make up for the 42-27 loss in 2021 when the Wolverines pulverized an OSU defense for 297 yards and six touchdowns on the ground. You could dismiss the losses in 2022 and

’23 to the underhanded approach Michigan and former head coach Jim Harbaugh were employing, but the fact remains the Wolverines were the more physical team in each of those contests. In 2022 during a 45-23 win, Michigan held a 252-143 edge in the running game, and during the 30-24 victory a year later, the Wolverines rushed for 156 yards while the Buckeyes mustered only 107.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Even last year when Ohio State entered the game favored by three touchdowns against an injury-riddled rival that had lost four of its previous six games, Michigan achieved a 13-10 win based at least in part on the fact it rushed for 172 yards while holding the Buckeyes to 77.

So far this season, Michigan has averaged 223.5 yards per game on the ground while Ohio State has averaged 170.2. That average has increased exponentially over the past month as the Buckeyes have finally gotten their ground game in gear. Over their last four games, they have averaged 202.5 yards rushing albeit against some of the most porous run defenses in the Big Ten.

Does that mean Day will stubbornly instruct offensive coordinator Brian Hartline to employ a power running game plan against the Wolverines? Based upon what we saw during the 42-9 walkover against Rutgers, one might come to that conclusion.

With Smith and Tate walking the sideline in street clothes, the Buckeyes ran three straight times on their opening possession and eight times in total on an 11-play, 73-yard drive before freshman Bo Jackson fumbled at the 1-yard line. A month ago when everyone was still healthy, Sayin went to the air eight times on a nine-play opening possession that kicked off a 34-0 win at Wisconsin.

Will Smith and Tate be healthy enough to play against Michigan? If I could foretell the future, I’d be soaking up the sun somewhere in the South Pacific rather than sitting behind this keyboard. But if nearly a half-century of deciphering coach-speak tells me anything, I would guess Smith will play and be at or near 100-percent efficiency.

Tate is another matter entirely. With Ohio State playing its characteristic tight-lipped self with regard to injuries, we have no idea exactly what Tate’s problem is much less its severity. Despite bitter memories of Nick Bosa and Jaxon Smith-Njigba seared firmly into my brain, knowing a little bit about Tate and his toughness (mental as well as physical) would lead me to believe if he can get out of bed that morning, he’ll play against Michigan.

Perception Vs. Reality

The other prevailing thought that keeps swirling through cyberspace is that Ohio State is really just a paper tiger, a team whose perceived strength is derived only from the soft schedule it has played. This bunch of Buckeyes with its baby-faced quarterback, prima donna receivers trying to preserve their NFL futures and handsy defensive backs who get away with pass interference on every play will fold once they’re faced with real-life adversity.

The fact is that Ohio State has trailed this season for only 26:09 of a possible 660

minutes and has never faced a deficit of more than three points through its first 11 games. Truth be told, the Buckeyes don’t have a résumé built upon overcoming adversity. But maybe, just maybe, rather than blaming that on a soft schedule, Ohio State is good enough to make their opponents seem not as strong as they are.

The season began against top-ranked Texas, a team we know now isn’t an elite team but still one good enough to have beaten Oklahoma by 17 points and average nearly 30 points per game against its SEC rivals. Who knew that Penn State, ranked No. 2 in the nation after throttling its first three opponents by the combined score of 132-17, would implode and collapse? Washington was undefeated, on the cusp of entering the national rankings and protecting the nation’s longest home winning streak at 22 when the Buckeyes shut down the Huskies, allowing them to convert just 1 of 11 third downs during a 24-6 decision that wasn’t nearly as close as that score might indicate.

Unlike Michigan, which needs a victory in the regular-season finale to keep any flickering hopes alive of making the College Football Playoff field, it’s likely Ohio State has already made the tournament regardless of what happens in Ann Arbor. Perhaps the need for a victory is one more plus in the Michigan column.

Naturally, failure to beat your archrivals for a fifth consecutive year – something that hasn’t happened in 100 years – is unthinkable to a fan base whose ultra-dominance in the series that began with Jim Tressel and carried through the entire Urban Meyer era remains fresh in its mind.

I don’t think Day wants to beat Michigan any more than his predecessors, but I also think he has previously approached the rivalry with an all-or-nothing mentality. Take what he said last year at the traditional Skull Session just before the game: “Our No. 1 goal every year is to win this game. We put everything we possibly have in our process every single day to work on this game. ... This is about our toughness. This is about our work ethic. This is about our integrity, our character, our resilience and who we are as Buckeyes.”

Then, somewhere between St. John Arena and Ohio Stadium, those words became just words. The team was tighter than a new shoe, Day and former offensive coordinator Chip Kelly adopted a mentality of coaching not to lose and, well, you know the rest.

Day and Kelly apparently learned their lesson during the national championship run, blowing through Tennessee like a hurricane before curb-stomping Oregon, smothering Texas and demoralizing Notre Dame. The offense that stubbornly refused to use its most potent weapons against Michigan averaged 36.3 points and 447.0 total yards during the four-game playoff run.

According to some, what made the Buckeyes so unstoppable during the title march was the admission that they had stopped themselves in the rivalry game.

“I would say Coach Day has a different look in his eye,” OSU receiver Brandon Inniss said a couple of weeks ago. “I mean, a lot of people see it. I just feel like ever since that team up north loss last year, it’s been a different Coach Day.”

Obviously, we won’t know if it’s a “different Coach Day” until we see the results in Ann Arbor. But there is every indication that perhaps the coach is a little more comfortable with the emotional capital he banked last year after hoisting the national championship trophy. That might make the difference.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

WRs Out Against Rutgers

Ohio State was once again without multiple of its top pass catchers in the Buckeyes' 42-9 win over Rutgers on Nov. 22.

Most notably, Ohio State was without its star wide receivers in Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate.

Smith had been listed as questionable ahead of the Buckeyes' victory over UCLA the week prior and was limited in game action before Ohio State pulled the wideout before halftime.

Tate, on the other hand, missed his third straight outing for Ohio State. According to head coach Ryan Day, the junior wide receiver reportedly suffered a minor injury before the Buckeyes' matchup with Purdue on Nov. 8, and Tate has yet to play since.



Carnell Tate

Also out for Ohio State in the victory was freshman wide receiver Quincy Porter, who may have been in line for a good amount of work without Smith and Tate in the lineup.

Offensive lineman Josh Padilla, who suffered an injury in the second half against Penn State on Nov. 1, was not listed on the injury report but missed his third straight game for Ohio State.

After CJ Donaldson Jr. entered the UCLA game questionable but did not receive any time, the senior running back was back in

the lineup for Ohio State against Rutgers, rushing three times for 8 yards and a touchdown.

Day Says OSU To Stick With Rotation At Guard

Ohio State's right guard position still hasn't been settled. Although senior guard Tegra Tshabola has started all 11 games this season, he's continued to rotate with other interior offensive linemen.

At the beginning of the season, it was senior offensive lineman Ethan Onianwa who rotated with Tshabola at right guard, but toward the middle of the season, the Buckeyes had Padilla split time with Tshabola.

After Padilla suffered an injury that kept him out of Ohio State's wins over Purdue and UCLA, redshirt freshman Gabe VanSickle helped fill in for him at right guard. The redshirt freshman played only one series with the Buckeyes' first-team offense against Purdue, but he played 44 snaps, which was 18 more than Tshabola's 26 snaps, in the team's win over the Bruins.

"(It was) solid," Day said on Nov. 18 of VanSickle's performance. "That was his first real action, and I thought there were good snaps there. And you can see the talent. You can see the bend. You can see the power. He looks like he belongs. So now he's going to start stacking some games here."

VanSickle's sudden impact only complicates a right guard position that had already been in flux before he was inserted on the field. Day said Ohio State plans on keeping its two-man rotation at right guard, and it remains unclear who will be a part of that rotation once Padilla returns.

"We probably want to keep it to two," Day said. "I guess if the snap count got really high, we could do that (rotate three). But we probably want to keep it to two guys."

Four Bucks Being Considered For Awards

Several Buckeyes earned recognition for an outstanding season since BSB last went to press.

Ohio State junior safety Caleb Downs was named a finalist for the Bronko Nagur-

2025 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Aug. 30	TEXAS	W, 14-7	FOX	8-3, 52-37 win over Arkansas
Sept. 6	GRAMBLING	W, 70-0	BTN	7-4, idle
Sept. 13	OHIO	W, 37-9	Peacock	7-4, 42-14 win over UMass
Sept. 27	at Washington	W, 24-6	CBS	8-3, 48-14 win over UCLA
Oct. 4	MINNESOTA	W, 42-3	NBC	6-5, 38-35 loss to Northwestern
Oct. 11	at Illinois	W 34-16	FOX	7-4, 27-10 loss to Wisconsin
Oct. 18	at Wisconsin	W, 34-0	CBS	4-7, 27-10 win over Illinois
Nov. 1	PENN STATE	W, 38-14	FOX	5-6, 37-10 win over Nebraska
Nov. 8	at Purdue	W, 34-10	BTN	2-9, idle
Nov. 15	UCLA	W, 48-10	NBC	3-8, 48-14 loss to Washington
Nov. 22	RUTGERS	W, 42-9	FOX	5-6, 42-9 loss to Ohio State
Nov. 29	at Michigan	Noon	FOX	9-2, 45-20 win over Maryland

ski Award on Nov. 20, which is given yearly to the nation's top defensive player.

He is one of four players who were named finalists, joining Texas A&M defensive end Cashius Howell, Notre Dame cornerback Leonard Moore and Texas Tech linebacker Jacob Rodriguez.

In 10 games, he has 49 tackles, which is third on the team and includes five tackles for loss, as well as two interceptions and a pass breakup.

Ohio State's pair of star wide receivers, Smith and Tate, were two of 13 semifinalists for the Biletnikoff Award, which honors the nation's most outstanding receiver in the FBS regardless of position.

Smith, who has been the Buckeyes' most consistent weapon offensively in 2025, earned the recognition after hauling in 69 catches for 902 yards and 10 touchdowns this season. His marks rank the sophomore receiver in the top 10 in nearly every statistical category, including touchdowns (tied for sixth), receptions and receptions per game (eighth), as well as yards and yards per game (eighth).

Outside of his performance against the Bruins (four catches), where he was limited to only the first half with an undisclosed injury, Smith has amassed five or more receptions in every game this season, while adding four games of over 100 yards receiving.

Tate has missed the last three games for the Buckeyes due to injury. However, he

has still managed to rack up 39 catches for 711 yards and seven touchdowns in eight games. The junior wideout has also rushed twice for 16 yards.

The Chicago native ranks 32nd in the FBS with 18.2 yards per catch.

Ohio State defensive tackle Kayden McDonald also received national recognition. He was nominated as a semifinalist for the Outland Trophy on Nov. 19, which is given annually to the top defensive lineman in the country.

The 6-3, 326-pound defensive tackle has been dominant this season for the Buckeyes, racking up 47 tackles, eight tackles for loss, three sacks, and two quarterback hurries. McDonald has also forced two fumbles and recovered one fumble.

This season, McDonald also became the first Buckeye nose tackle since Johnathan Hankins in 2012 to record eight tackles in a game. McDonald didn't just do it once, but twice, bringing down eight players against both Texas and Penn State.

Downs and McDonald have been two of the most important pieces of the Ohio State defense this year, which is No. 1 in both scoring defense and total defense, giving up just 7.6 points per game and 206.6 yards per game.

Tressel Rings Victory Bell

For the third time this season, a former Ohio State head coach rang the Buckeyes'

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victory bell before their final home game of the year.

Jim Tressel, who coached the Buckeyes from 2001-10, continued the Buckeyes' new victory bell tradition for their contest against Rutgers. Tressel joined John Cooper (1988-2000), who rang the bell against Grambling State, and Urban Meyer (2012-18), who did so before the Penn State game, as former Ohio State head coaches to ring the victory bell.

Tressel is the seventh former Buckeye to ring the victory bell, joining Cooper, Meyer and two-time Heisman Trophy-winning running back Archie Griffin (before the Texas game), as well as three Ohio State basketball legends in Clark Kellogg (Ohio), Michael Redd (Minnesota) and Jerry Lucas (UCLA).

Tressel earned a 106-23 record in his 10 seasons as Ohio State's head coach while falling to Michigan just one time. He

also led Ohio State to the 2002 national title while receiving multiple coach of the year honors, including the Woody Hayes Trophy.

Buckeyes Favored In Rivalry Game

In Ohio State and Michigan's rivalry bout on Nov. 29 at Michigan Stadium, the Buckeyes opened as 11.5-point favorites over the

Wolverines, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

So far this season, Ohio State is 9-2 against the spread, while failing to cover by half a point in its 37-9 victory over Ohio (-28.5) and by 5.5 points in the 34-10 win at Purdue (-29.5).

Ohio State has been favored by at least 9.5 points in every single Big Ten game this

Continued On Page 6

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Continued From Page 5

year and was an underdog only before its 14-7 win over then-No. 1 Texas.

According to Odds Shark, the 11.5-point line is the second-largest spread in the last 10 years of The Game, trailing only the 20.5-point margin by which Ohio State was favored in 2024. Ohio State has been favored in eight out of the last 10 renditions of The Game.

The Buckeyes have not covered the spread in The Game since they defeated Michigan 56-27 in 2019.

OL Terry Sheds Black Stripe

Transfer offensive lineman Justin Terry became the latest Ohio State player to shed his black stripe, having it removed on Nov. 19 after practice.

Terry came to Ohio State from West Virginia over the offseason and hasn't seen much playing time for the Buckeyes, but when the offense broke out its Bison package against Purdue with six offensive linemen on the field, Terry was the extra blocker.

Terry went to West Virginia out of the 2024 recruiting class from Pickerington (Ohio) Central High School. He was the 27th Buckeye to have his black stripe removed in 2025.

Five Bucks Players Of The Game

Ohio State honored five Buckeyes as its

players of the game for their standout performances against UCLA.

Following the No. 1 Buckeyes' 48-10 victory over UCLA in Ohio Stadium on Nov. 15, Ohio State center Carson Hinzman, left tackle Austin Siereveld and left guard Luke Montgomery were named offensive players of the game, Downs earned defensive player of the game honors, while nickel back Lorenzo Styles Jr. received the distinction on special teams.

Hinzman, Siereveld and Montgomery earned offensive player of the game honors following a strong performance along Ohio State's offensive line. UCLA did not hurry Ohio State quarterback Julian Sayin a single time, while the Bruins sacked the Buckeyes' redshirt freshman once.

Downs was named Ohio State's defensive player of the game after a solid three-tackle performance. On the Bruins' first offensive play of the game, the junior safety brought down UCLA running back Jaivian Thomas for a tackle for loss.

Styles was rewarded as the Buckeyes'

special teams player of the game following a 100-yard kickoff-return touchdown with just three seconds remaining in the third quarter. It marked the first time Ohio State had returned a kickoff for a touchdown since Nov. 25, 2010, when Jordan Hall took a boot 85 yards back for a score against rival Michigan in a 37-7 victory. The graduate nickel back was also second on the Buckeye defense with five tackles (three solo).

Daniels, Roberts Top Grades Against UCLA

Ohio State had a few different players receiving high marks from Pro Football Focus for their performances against UCLA.

Sophomore offensive tackle Phillip Daniels and freshman tight end Nate Roberts were the two highest-graded Buckeyes in the game. Daniels, Ohio State's starting right tackle, helped Ohio State rush for 222 yards on 33 carries. It was the first time an Ohio State offensive lineman has been Ohio State's highest-graded player

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1985

Devastating.

That was the word everybody seemed to dwell on after Wisconsin had handed Ohio State a 12-7 upset loss on Nov. 16.

"You just saw a devastating loss to Ohio State University," said Buckeye coach Earle Bruce in opening his postgame press conference. "Wisconsin played an outstanding game of controlling the clock and running a slow offense and picking their way to a victory."

The Buckeyes possibly fumbled away a chance at returning to the Rose Bowl. With Iowa gaining a narrow 27-24 victory over Purdue, the Hawkeyes now were in control. A home-field victory over Minnesota on the final Saturday of the regular season would put Iowa in the Rose Bowl opposite the Pac-10 champion.

Ohio State could still earn the trip to Pasadena with a victory at Michigan on Nov. 23 – provided Iowa stumbled against the Golden Gophers.

35 Years Ago — 1990

Ohio State freshman running back Robert Smith ran his way into the record books on Nov. 17, leading the Buckeyes to a 35-10 victory over Wisconsin.

Smith shattered the school's freshman rushing record of 867 yards set nearly two decades earlier by Archie Griffin and became the first Buckeye freshman ever to go over the 1,000-yard mark.

Becoming only the 26th freshman in NCAA history to crack the 1,000-yard barrier, Smith rushed for 171 yards and two touchdowns against the Badgers, winning his fourth Big Bear Buckeye of the Week honor of the season.

Most importantly, he helped the Buckeyes stay alive in the run for the Rose Bowl. OSU had to defeat archrival Michigan on Nov. 24 and hope that Minnesota could either tie or defeat Iowa the same day in order to earn a trip to Pasadena.

30 Years Ago — 1995

For the second time in three years, Ohio State would go into Ann Arbor, Mich., with a Rose Bowl berth at stake in the regular-season finale with Michigan.

The No. 2-ranked Buckeyes closed out the home portion of their schedule with another impressive win, a 42-3 stomping of Indiana on Nov. 18.

But the Buckeyes (11-0, 7-0 Big Ten) had no room for error – or even a tie – when they visited Michigan. Northwestern saw to that, beating Purdue 23-8 to end its season 10-1 overall and a perfect 8-0 in the Big Ten.

The Wildcats, who clinched at least a share of their first conference title since 1936, had put the heat directly on OSU to win its biggest rivalry game.

"We're 11-0 and playing for a national championship," said defensive end Mike Vrabel. "I think that's going to be all the incentive that we're going to need."

25 Years Ago — 2000

By the end of a hard-hitting Big Ten football game on Nov. 11 at Illinois, Ohio State may have had a shortage of bodies, but there was no shortage of heroes.

The 13th-ranked Buckeyes pulled out a 24-21 thriller over the Fighting Illini despite losing starting tailback Derek Combs and starting wide receivers Reggie Germany and Ken-Yon Rambo to injury.

With those players sidelined, the Buckeyes turned to tailback

Jonathan Wells to run the football, quarterback Steve Bellisari to twice execute the two-minute offense and kicker Dan Stultz to boot four field goals, including the 34-yard game-winner as time expired.

Stultz received the game ball for his final-play heroics, but he said the credit for the victory – which put OSU in position to play Michigan for a piece of the Big Ten championship on Nov. 18 – belonged to a lot of people.

"This ball right here, I wish I could give it to Ken-Yon Rambo, Reggie Germany, Steve Bellisari, our offensive line, Jonathan Wells and our whole defense because they played lights out," Stultz said.

20 Years Ago — 2005

As Senior Days go in Columbus, it couldn't have gone much better.

On a sun-splashed mid-November day with more than 105,000 fans cheering them on, the senior members of the Ohio State football team put a valedictory on their service as Buckeyes by rolling to a 48-7 victory over Northwestern.

Several of the senior members of the team played key roles in the contest as OSU spotted the Wildcats' high-octane offense an early touchdown then throttled it the rest of the way.

Northwestern entered the contest ranked seventh in the nation in both passing and total offense but couldn't muster any sort of attack against the Buckeyes.

The Wildcats drove 80 yards on the game's first possession then were limited to only 171 the rest of the way. Their 251 total yards represented a season low by far and less than half of their game average of 508.1 yards. In fact, Northwestern's lowest total offense figure had been 415 yards during a 33-17 loss to Michigan.

15 Years Ago — 2010

All quarterbacks are measured by two things: championship rings and leadership.

Though the former can be quantified easily, the latter is usually up to a checklist of interpretation. Does the quarterback have command of the huddle? Can he improvise and make plays on his own? Does he call his own plays during crunch time? How good is he in the fourth quarter in front of a hostile crowd with the game on the line?

After his performance on Nov. 20, Ohio State quarterback Terrelle Pryor left any lingering doubt about his worth blowing away on a crisp Iowa evening wind. The junior QB engineered a 12-play, 76-yard, season-saving touchdown drive to rally the ninth-ranked Buckeyes to a 20-17 victory over No. 20 Iowa.

Two plays during the drive helped fuel the comeback, and Pryor was directly responsible for both.

Command of the huddle? Check.

"Terrelle was fired up there at the end," said OSU senior offensive guard Bryant Browning. "But he was fired up the whole game. He was fired up this whole week. He really stayed into it, and you want to perform well for a guy like that."

10 Years Ago — 2015

In Columbus, the one constant over the previous two seasons was winning. It wasn't always pretty – although it often was – but the Buckeyes looked like college football's next superpower when they truly flexed their muscle.

Everyone knew that would eventually come to an end, nobody more so than Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer. He was the

first coach in Division I college football history to put together four different 20-game winning streaks, which also made him the only coach in Division I college football history to see four different 20-game winning streaks come to an end.

The end to the most recent one was coming – the signs appeared too often in 2015 – but it wasn't supposed to come just yet. There was a date with destiny, a Nov. 28 meeting with Michigan, that would be followed by a conference title game and a pair of playoff matchups if the Buckeyes kept winning.

No more. The Buckeyes would still head to Michigan, but it wouldn't come with the pressure of trying to avoid the fate of the legendary 1969 team. There would likely be no conference championship, which would also almost certainly mean no playoff for the Buckeyes after falling 17-14 against No. 9 Michigan State on Nov. 21.

Five Years Ago — 2020

A win over the ninth-ranked team in the country would usually be cause for celebration. But following Ohio State's 42-35 victory against Indiana on Nov. 21, which gave the Buckeyes sole possession of first place in the Big Ten's East Division, head coach Ryan Day seemed unsatisfied.

"I thought the start of the game was ridiculous," Day said after the game. "The energy that we came out with was as good as I've seen all year. We played really, really well in the first half. We really dominated."

"But then we gave up some big plays and let them back into the game. We have to figure out a way to close out games. This is the second game in a row now where we let a team hang around a little bit, and we have to get that fixed."

Ohio State's much-maligned defense was impressive in the first two quarters, holding Indiana to just seven points and minus-6 yards rushing.

The offense also put up 28 first-half points despite a pair of uncharacteristic first-quarter interceptions from quarterback Justin Fields, giving the Buckeyes a comfortable halftime lead.

The final two frames were a different story, however. The Hoosiers outscored the Buckeyes 28-14 and had the ball late in the fourth quarter with the chance to score the game-tying touchdown – or possibly the game-winning score, had they gone for two – in the final minute.

One Year Ago — 2024

Indiana head coach Curt Cignetti finished a pregame interview by parroting his famous quote that was shared all over the college football world when he was initially hired by Indiana.

"Google me," he said. "I win."

The Buckeyes are accustomed to having that type of target on their backs, and head coach Ryan Day seemed like he might have been tired of hearing about just how good Indiana was in the week leading up to the game.

On ESPN's "Pat McAfee Show" on Nov. 22, McAfee finished Day's guest appearance by reminding the coach, "This Hoosiers team is the real deal." "So are we," Day responded.

That energy bled into the Buckeyes' 38-15 win over the No. 5-ranked Hoosiers.

OSU seemed to be playing with an edge that wasn't around for most of its games – understandably so for many of the blow-outs they had been on the winning end of – and Day understood that is something they would need for the rest of this season if they wanted to reach their goals.

No Paper By Kickoff? Read The Entire Issue Online

With Thanksgiving falling two days before the Michigan game, many of you will not receive your BSB before the game. Don't forget that the entire issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin will be posted online at BuckeyeSports.com by Tuesday before the game, the same day as your paper is mailed. This is a free service for BSB subscribers.

The next print issue of BSB mails Dec. 2. There is no reason to wait for your next Buckeye Sports Bulletin print edition to get the latest OSU sports news, including any recruiting activity. The BSB staff will be reporting from every press conference or other availability and following all of the Ohio State sports activity. All the news is available in real time at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com. Don't forget, if the Buckeyes make the Big Ten Championship Game, coverage will be online only.

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

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season ended at the time of those rankings. Instead, No. 13 Miami (Fla.) of the ACC and No. 24 Tulane of the American conference would make it in.

Three other Big Ten teams were included in the rankings, with No. 15 USC, No. 18 Michigan and No. 21 Illinois making an appearance.

Then, in the Associated Press' top-25 rankings released after the Buckeyes' win over Rutgers, Day's squad was ranked No. 1 for the 13th straight week.

Women's Soccer Topples No. 1 Irish

In the second round of the 2025 NCAA women's soccer tournament on Nov. 20, Ohio State (10-4-6) stunned No. 1 seed Notre Dame (15-2-3) in South Bend, Ind., with a game-winning goal from sophomore forward Jadin Bonham with 34 seconds remaining in double overtime.

In the 109th minute, Ohio State junior defender Mia McSweeney centered a ball from near the left corner of the field, before the ball bounced through traffic and Bonham controlled it with her chest before drilling in a left-footed strike to send the Buckeyes to the Sweet 16 for the second straight year.

Ohio State was stout defensively, holding off a 36-shot barrage from Notre Dame with senior goalkeeper Molly Pritchard saving five shots on the day. Despite Ohio State taking just eight shots, the Buckeyes tied the Irish with five strikes on goal.

It was the highest-ranked opponent the Buckeyes have defeated in program history. Ohio State defeated Notre Dame, which was the top seed in their section of the bracket and the No. 2-ranked team nationally.

In the next round, the Buckeyes defeated the No. 5 seed Baylor Bears 2-1 in South Bend on Nov. 23, ultimately ending their season.

Ohio State heads to the Elite Eight, where it will take on No. 3-seeded Florida State. The game time had not been announced when BSB went to press.

this season.

Roberts, who previously was Ohio State's lowest-graded player in the team's 34-10 win over Purdue on Nov. 8, received a grade of 87.9 after going for a season-high 24 receiving yards on two catches.

Sophomore running back James Peoples also received high marks for his performance against the Bruins. Peoples received a grade of 86.7 after he rushed for 42 yards and two touchdowns on six carries. His biggest play of the game came on a 19-yard touchdown run in the second quarter, in which he hurdled over a UCLA defender on the way to the end zone.

On the defensive side of the ball, defen-

sive tackle Tywone Malone Jr. was Ohio State's highest-graded player. Playing on 21 snaps, Malone received a grade of 86.0 after totaling one tackle and helping hold the Bruins to 68 yards rushing (2.7 per carry).

Freshman cornerback Devin Sanchez (31.6 grade, 29 snaps), freshman linebacker Garrett Stover (33.8 grade, 2) and senior defensive end Beau Atkinson (46.1, 17) were the lowest-graded Buckeyes against UCLA.

OSU Remains No. 1 In AP, CFP Polls

The College Football Playoff committee

released its third rankings of the season on Nov. 18, and for the third straight week, Ohio State was ranked No. 1.

Following Ohio State in the rankings were No. 2 Indiana, No. 3 Texas A&M and No. 4 Georgia. If the season ended today, those four teams would get a first-round bye.

No. 5 Texas Tech, No. 6 Ole Miss, No. 7 Oregon, No. 8 Oklahoma, No. 9 Notre Dame, No. 10 Alabama, No. 11 BYU and No. 12 Utah made up the rest of the top 12.

However, because the five highest-ranked conference champions are included in the College Football Playoff, Utah and BYU would not be included in the playoffs if the

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There's Nothing Routine About Michigan Week

Continued From Page 1

State was one of the favorites to win the national championship at the time.

Then, after the game, when Wolverines players planted a Block "M" flag at midfield and Ohio State responded by leaving in the middle of "Carmen Ohio" to meet the Michigan players at midfield to fight, the rivalry seemed to be as heated as it ever had been, even though the Buckeyes' season was still very much alive.

The 2021 recruiting class left with no win over Michigan. Now the 2022 recruiting class is trying to make sure that won't be the case for them.

It's senior defensive end Caden Curry's last chance to get a pair of gold pants, and he's well aware.

"Seeing how those guys went out last year, it's so heartbreaking," Curry said. "For me as a player, seeing them go through so much hard work and dedication to come up short time and time again – I don't want to be that guy. Nobody wants to be that guy on the other side. I want to do it for them, and I want to do it for us."

The 2021 class that lost four times to Michigan had scars from The Game by the time it came last season, and that made them want to beat their archrivals more than anything, maybe trying to do too much in the game.

Just as the players this season have not claimed last year's national championship run, saying that they don't have any banners of their own, it could also be the case that since those same players didn't have major impacts on the Michigan games in past seasons, they don't have the same scars as last year's team did from losing to the Wolverines.

Curry believes the team is mentally ready for what's coming in Ann Arbor.

"We're strong. Ever since last year, we've had a strong mentality," he said. "We're ready for anything that comes."

There is likely value in treating Michigan week like any other week, but it's clear from the way the players and coaches still talk about this game that they realize this is the biggest game of the regular season. So the Buckeyes will have to balance those two things and figure out whatever level of that balance works best for them.

"We're just treating it like it's another week, but there's obviously more on the line," Curry said. "We know that. But we're fighting to be the best versions of ourselves and just being mentally prepared and physically prepared and having everything we need to go out there and succeed."

The optimization of that routine has obviously also been on Day's mind leading up to the game. He knows that, even though it's the same preparation that the Buckeyes have done all year for every team, they have to be better in that preparation to go into the Big House and end the losing streak.

"Now, this week has to be the best," he said. "We've been working towards this all year. We know that the opponent is different. We know what's at stake. We know we're playing for hardware now, but at the end of the day, it's still about us. We can't all of a sudden change things."

It's been a very similar approach for Michigan, which has peaked at the right time the last couple of seasons, winning the national title in 2023 and beating the Buckeyes and Alabama in its last two contests last year.

"We talk about starving our distractions and feeding our focus," said Wolverine head coach Sherrone Moore after beating Maryland the same day Ohio State beat Rutgers. "Especially at this time. They always remember November and what you do in that month. Playing our best football now is huge, and we look to continue to do that."

Just as Ohio State moved on as soon as the game against Rutgers was in hand, Michigan did the same. Moore said that



SONNY BROCKWAY

BIGGER STAKES — Freshman running back Bo Jackson prepped for his first Michigan game by rushing for 110 yards and two touchdowns against Rutgers, but a fumble like the one he had against the Scarlet Knights could prove fatal vs. the Wolverines.

athletic director Warde Manuel had to keep him from going back to his office to prepare for the Buckeyes the night of the Wolverines' win over the Terrapins.

"The page is completely turned," Moore said. "By Warde's discretion, I won't be in the office tonight. Maybe. But this is the most important game of the year. It's around our building. It's everything. We're putting everything we've got into winning this game."

Moore has led the Wolverines to two of the four straight wins in The Game, and he said that the preparation that goes on throughout the entire year is a big part of that.

"You can't prepare for The Game the

week of The Game. It's got to happen in January. It's got to happen in February, it's got to happen in March and in the summer," he said. "If you try to shift the way you prepare that week, then it's too late. We've been doing this for a while, but now we get to focus in from a game plan standpoint."

Moore didn't shy away from how much he respects the talent that Ohio State has this season. He said he watches the Buckeyes every single week to prepare for them.

"They're a really good football team," Moore said. "They're the No. 1 team in the country. They have talent everywhere on offense, on defense, and on special teams, too. But I think we have a really good foot-



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ball team, too. We have really good players, and we have talent everywhere.”

The Buckeyes have been ready for The Game all year as well.

“It’s been on our minds since we lost it last year,” junior defensive end Kenyatta Jackson Jr. said. “The week is here. It’s finally here. We’re preparing really hard for this next weekend.”

Get Well Soon

Ohio State played in its win over Rutgers without either of its star wide receivers, Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate. It was the second straight week that the two were dealing with injuries.

Tate was originally held out of the win over Purdue on Nov. 8 for precautionary reasons due to a pregame issue he had, and then he wasn’t available for the win over UCLA.

Then, in the win over the Bruins, Smith left the game before halftime, didn’t come back in the second half, and was seen limping into the locker room postgame. Neither he nor Tate was available for the win over the Scarlet Knights, and just like it was in the second half of the win over the Bruins when the two receivers were watching from the sideline, the offense was a bit clunky.

It seemed like quarterback Julian Sayin was improving week to week since Texas came to Columbus on Aug. 30, but when Tate and Smith started to miss time, he started to look a little less like a Heisman Trophy candidate. But he didn’t play terribly either.

Sayin finished the contest 13 of 19 passing for 157 yards and two touchdowns while the run game took over and carried the ball for 254 yards on 38 totes, good for

an average of 6.7 yards per carry.

Any team that takes its best two receivers off the field would struggle offensively, so the Buckeyes aren’t alone in that. But with the Michigan game coming up and Tate and Smith both dealing with injuries, that could end up being a huge deal for Ohio State.

It’s entirely possible that Day is just being as cautious as he possibly can with his best players. Who could blame him when he’s looking at possibly becoming the first OSU head coach since John Wilce in the 1920s to lose more than four straight games to the Wolverines?

Moore made a similar decision to try to keep his running back healthy in the week leading up to the game. The Wolverines’ Jordan Marshall was held out of the win over Maryland, even though Moore said he could have played.

But the worry for Buckeye fans has to be very real with the status of both receivers unclear. Day will very likely give a little more information in the week leading up to the game but said after the win over Rutgers that the two receivers are day-to-day and are working hard to get back on the field.

Day said he thought the replacements in the passing game did well.

“I thought overall there were some good things there. I thought David (Adolph) had a really big third-down catch,” he said. “Brandon (Inniss) had a really big week last week, and I thought Max (Klare) stepped up in a big way. It’s a great opportunity for those guys.

“Brandon Inniss is a leader. He’s a captain of our team. Bryson Rodgers, Mylan (Graham), and David, they really had an

opportunity here to step up, and I think there are some good things that they did. Then there are some things they’ll get on film and (improve). We need to play depth, everyone knows that, and this is their opportunity.”

It was never a very real threat that the Buckeyes were going to lose to the Scarlet Knights. Even when they were up just 14-3 going into halftime, Day was still trying new things on the field with his offense, rotating Sayin with backup Lincoln Kienholz at times.

But even though it felt like the Buckeyes would win the game handily going in and their lead never felt very threatened throughout the contest, Day was happy with how his team stayed focused.

“I give the guys a lot of credit for focusing. I think not having both Carnell and Jeremiah allowed us to focus even more on the job at hand,” Day said. “Whether that really played into it or not, I really don’t know, but our guys have been pretty consistent that way.”

A Trip On I-70

Since the Buckeyes haven’t been able to beat Michigan in the last four seasons, they also haven’t been able to make it to a Big Ten Championship Game in that time either. The Wolverines took that spot from them in 2021, 2022 and 2023, winning the conference title three straight years.

In 2024, Michigan did nothing else but play spoiler for Ohio State, killing its dreams of playing at Lucas Oil Stadium for a Big Ten title for the first time since 2020.

“That’s one of our main goals for the season every year,” said junior center Carson Hinzman on Nov. 19. “We’ve never

been to a Big Ten championship. We’ve never really done anything with this team in any aspect. We don’t have any hardware, besides the (Illibuck) turtle.”

Now that the Wolverines have beaten Maryland 45-20, if Ohio State loses to Michigan for the fifth straight time, it would almost certainly miss the Big Ten Championship Game yet again.

With a 7-1 conference record, the Wolverines have a chance to be the team that takes the Buckeyes’ spot in Indianapolis. If they do pull off the upset yet again, they would need help from Washington beating Oregon in the final week of the regular season, but in effect, this is a good, old-fashioned Ohio State-Michigan matchup for a chance at the Big Ten title.

Day also understands that a trip to Indianapolis is at stake, which he said is a big motivator for the team.

“We want to keep it as routine as we can, knowing that now we’re playing for hardware,” he said. “Not only (are we playing) for gold pants, but also an opportunity to get to Indy.”

As is often the case going into the rivalry game, two of the Buckeyes’ three goals they always set for themselves are at stake in this game. Barring one of the biggest upsets of the college football season – Indiana losing to Purdue on Nov. 29 – the Buckeyes can’t lose the game against Michigan and still make the trip to Lucas Oil Stadium. That scenario would also take Oregon losing a game that it will be favored in.

Hinzman put it as simply as he could after the game.

“We have to win,” he said. “We have to win.”

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Opening Drive Results in Jackson Fumble

After the Ohio State defense allowed just 1 yard on Rutgers' first three offensive plays of the game, the Scarlet Knights were forced to punt from their own 26-yard line. The 47-yard boot by Rutgers punter Jakob Anderson set Ohio State up with the football on the Buckeye 27.

GAME NOTEBOOK Sam Cipriani

Following a rush for minus-1 yard by freshman running back Bo Jackson, Ohio State was off to the races. Jackson ran four times for 10 or more yards (13, 12, 14, 10) on the Buckeyes' opening possession, while Julian Sayin completed all three of his passes for 18 yards, and Ohio State drove 72 yards down the field to Rutgers' 1-yard line.

After Jackson's last 10-yard rush, Ohio State found itself with a first-and-1 with as much to gain for a touchdown before disaster struck.

The Buckeyes handed the ball off to Jackson, who attempted to rush up the gut for a score before he had the ball punched out by Scarlet Knights linebacker Abram Wright. Fellow Rutgers linebacker Dariel Djabome jumped on the football, securing a turnover that halted Ohio State's early momentum.

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day emphasized the importance of ball security, citing that a fumble at the 1-yard line could prove to be costly going forward.

"If we think we're going to get away with fumbling the ball at the 1-yard line or putting the ball on the turf, that's going to cost us a game," Day said. "We know that can't happen."

Despite the goal-line fumble, Jackson



SONNY BROCKWAY

FAMILY AFFAIR — The Styles family was well-represented on Senior Day when Ohio State defeated Rutgers 42-9. Cornerback Lorenzo Jr. (3) and linebacker Sonny (0) were recognized before the game. Proud father and former Ohio State player Lorenzo Sr. was there with his wife, Laverna (90), and daughters Tonia (3) and Sydney (0).

still managed to rush for 51 yards on the Buckeyes' opening possession.

Bucks Spear RU With Run Game

Ohio State's rushing attack was dom-

inant in its 42-9 victory over Rutgers. The Buckeyes rushed 38 times for 254 yards, their second-highest rushing total of the year and the most against a Big Ten opponent, while adding four touchdowns on the ground. Ohio State rushed for more (38 carries, 274 yards) only against Grambling State in Week 2.

Day was pleased with Ohio State's ground game against Rutgers but expressed a desire to improve.

"We always want it to be better, but when you rush the ball 38 times for 254 yards, that's good coming out," Day said. "We'll get on the film and figure out what is what. You have to sort through everything and figure out what the efficiency of each run was, because that's a part of it, too. You can hit some big runs and get fooled. I don't know exactly what our efficiency was and what worked well and what didn't, but I thought guys ran hard. I thought there were some good things. Certainly nothing is perfect, but that's what we're striving for."

Jackson was particularly impressive in Ohio State's win on Nov. 22. The freshman rushed a career-high 19 times for 110 yards and two touchdowns, while losing the fumble early at the goal line. It was the fifth time this season that Jackson gained over 100 yards on the ground.

Jackson also totaled eight rushes of 10-plus yards, including both of his scores — a 15-yard sprint to kick off the scoring and a 10-yard rushing touchdown in the third

quarter to extend the Buckeyes' lead to 25. The rookie back also added one catch for 14 yards.

Senior defensive end Kenyatta Jackson Jr. said that Bo Jackson's strength comes from his versatility, adding that the freshman's combination of speed, power and shiftiness allows the running back to pop in practice and on the field.

"You can see from the way he moves, he's an elusive back, and he can be a power back," Kenyatta Jackson said. "He can run you over as well. You can see him in practice, putting the work in, and then on Saturdays, you see him do the same things. Bo Jackson is really special."

Though he saw limited action against the Scarlet Knights, sophomore James Peoples made his mark for Ohio State. Peoples' first two rushes went for just 6 yards and no gain, respectively. However, on Peoples' third carry, the running back bounced out to the right and outraced a sea of Rutgers defenders for a 49-yard rushing touchdown.

Day emphasized the importance of team-blocking and execution on long runs, stating that without key blocks, Peoples' run would have likely been nullified by Rutgers.

"A 49-yard run for a touchdown is a big hit, but it takes execution. On that play, our right tackle and (tight end) Jelani Thurman did an excellent job coming off for the second level, and then Nate Roberts did a really good job on the secondary guy. Then we

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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

It was another great performance for Ohio State's passing defense in its 42-9 win over Rutgers on Nov. 22. The Buckeyes held Rutgers starting quarterback Athan Kaliakmanis to just 81 passing yards. Kaliakmanis came into the game as the second-leading passer in the Big Ten and completed only 10 of 20 passes for a completion percentage of 50.0 (his second-lowest mark of the season). Ohio State cornerbacks Jermaine Mathews Jr. and Davison Igbinosun were reliable as they've always been this season, although Mathews committed two pass-interference penalties. But the Buckeye pass rush also played a role in the defense's success against the pass.

Senior defensive end Caden Curry was the best Buckeye pass rusher. He finished the game with six total tackles and had two sacks, his second-highest total of the season.

Curry's biggest play came in the third quarter when Ohio State was leading 14-3. On second-and-9, Curry flew around the edge and made contact with Kaliakmanis' arm right as he was about to pass. After he dislodged the football, Curry recovered the fumble to give his offense the ball at the 1-yard line. The Buckeyes scored a touchdown just two plays later.

As a team, Ohio State had four sacks, tied for its second most of the season. It was the fifth time this season that Ohio State held an opponent under 100 passing yards.

What Didn't Work

Despite the win, the Buckeyes didn't have their most disciplined performance. Ohio State committed five penalties in the win, with three being called on the defense and two being called on the offense.

Ohio State had several damaging penalties, including one on sophomore defensive lineman Eddrick Houston that negated an interception by Igbinosun in the second quarter. On a third-

and-10 that occurred with just over 1:30 to go before halftime, Igbinosun had good coverage on Rutgers receiver Ian Strong deep down the field and leaped up to make what seemed to be the third interception of his collegiate career. However, Houston was flagged for illegal hands to the face, a 15-yard penalty that gave the Scarlet Knights an automatic first down in addition to taking Igbinosun's interception off the board.

It was one of three 15-yard penalties that the Buckeyes committed in the game.

Play Of The Game

The play of the game for the Buckeyes came during the second quarter on a 39-yard catch by junior tight end Max Klare. Prior to Klare's explosive reception, Ohio State struggled to get going offensively and led only 7-3 with just over six minutes to go in the half.

The Buckeyes sprang Klare free on the play with a hard play-action fake to the left. The play fake pulled several Scarlet Knights defenders toward the left side of the field, which left only one player trailing behind Klare, who leaked out to the right. Klare used his speed to create separation on Rutgers linebacker Dariel Djabome and hauled in the pass from redshirt-freshman quarterback Julian Sayin just beyond the line of scrimmage. Klare was off to the races from there. He eventually slowed down and was tripped up by Djabome, but he still made it to the Scarlet Knights' 32-yard line.

Klare's catch was Ohio State's second-longest play of the game and set up the team to score later that drive. Klare finished the game with season-high totals of seven catches for 105 yards and a touchdown.

— Bobby Gorbett

made a guy miss in the hole, and that's how it works.

"You need great execution, but you have to make a guy miss. I thought our offensive line did a decent job for the most part of getting guys to the second level. There were some things that we have to hit cleaner, but that's part of the run game as well. When we get positive plays in the run game and we stay on schedule, that's when we're at our best."

Fellow freshman running back Isaiah West toted the rock eight times for 48 yards, averaging 6.0 yards per carry. Backup quarterback Lincoln Kienholz also rushed three times for 37 yards, including a 22-yard scramble in the fourth quarter.

TE Klare Has Career Day

With multiple key pass-catchers listed as out prior to Ohio State's victory over Rutgers, the Buckeyes knew they would need a reliable option to emerge, and tight end Max Klare proved to be that steady presence.

Klare turned in a season-high performance with wide receivers Jeremiah Smith, Carnell Tate and Quincy Porter out, hauling in seven catches for 105 yards and one touchdown.

When asked about the offense's differences without Smith and Tate, Klare said he cherishes more reps but acknowledged that the offense isn't the same without the pair of star wideouts.

"There are more opportunities for me," Klare said. "Obviously, not having those guys out there hurts. We always want those guys out there because they're so special. But when your number is called, you have to go make a play, and that's what happened today."

Klare caught his lone touchdown pass following defensive end Caden Curry's strip-sack of Rutgers quarterback Athan Kaliakmanis at the 1-yard line. After a holding penalty pushed Ohio State back to Rutgers' 11, Sayin found Klare wide open in the front of the end zone for a touchdown reception. It

was Klare's second score of the season and first since Week 3 against Ohio.

Against Rutgers, the Buckeyes often worked to free up Klare on crossing routes. Sayin found the Purdue transfer tight end running free twice, coming across the middle from the left side of the field.

The first was a 39-yard reception in the second quarter. Then Klare and Sayin connected again for a 25-yard catch-and-run before the tight end hurdled Rutgers defensive back Kaj Sanders as he was being tackled by multiple Scarlet Knights defenders in the third quarter. The 39- and 25-yard catches stood as the Buckeyes' two longest pass plays of the afternoon. Both drives resulted in Ohio State touchdowns.

Klare expressed his excitement to finally get the ball in space. It's been a rare occurrence this season with the Buckeyes since he's not normally the first read.

"It felt good," Klare said. "That first one felt kind of awkward. I haven't been out like that for a while. I kind of blew a tire on that one. I don't know what it looked like, but it felt like that."

Through 10 games this season, Klare has racked up 38 catches for 400 yards, averaging 10.5 yards per reception.

OSU Penalties Extend RU Drives

Despite Ohio State delivering an overall clean performance against Rutgers, the Buckeyes had multiple costly defensive penalties that allowed the Scarlet Knights' offense to continue long drives.

Ohio State's first flag came just a minute into the second quarter. On fourth-and-5, cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. was called for pass interference on a Kaliakmanis pass intended for wide receiver KJ Duff. The flag on Mathews extended a drive that resulted in a Jai Patel 44-yard field goal to cut Ohio State's lead to 7-3.

Two Rutgers possessions later, Ohio State had an interception by cornerback Davison Igbinosun taken off the board after defensive tackle Eddrick Houston was called

for a 15-yard roughing the passer penalty. Fortunately for the Buckeyes, Rutgers was unable to capitalize on the Ohio State penalty.

Ohio State's penalty woes continued into the fourth quarter. On Rutgers' first possession of the final frame, the Scarlet Knights accepted a 15-yard penalty on the kickoff after Buckeye offensive tackle Philip Daniels was called for unsportsman-like conduct on CJ Donaldson Jr.'s rushing touchdown.

It then took Rutgers just six plays to drive 47 yards down to the Buckeye red zone. On second-and-6 from the 20, Ohio State's Mathews was once again called for pass interference on Duff, resulting in a 15-yard penalty to set the Scarlet Knights up on the Ohio State 5-yard line. Two plays later, Rutgers found the end zone for its first and only touchdown of the outing.

Kenyatta Jackson said that though Rutgers isn't the most formidable of opponents, Ohio State still must cut down on unnecessary penalties as it heads into the final stretch of the season.

"This is pretty important," he said. "This week wasn't a matchup game, and it probably didn't cost us that much, but next week it can. So we've got to clean it up in practice and in the meetings."

Seniors Shine On Senior Day

The Ohio State seniors capped their collegiate careers with a memorable final outing in Ohio Stadium.

Defensively, linebacker Sonny Styles and Curry paved the way for the Buckeyes. Curry led Ohio State with six total tackles (four solo) and a forced fumble, while also recording a team-high two sacks. Styles finished his afternoon second for the Buckeyes with five tackles, adding a half sack, one pass breakup and a quarterback hurry.

Day said the seniors have embodied everything the program stands for, and the win over Rutgers was about giving them the sendoff they earned, adding that he was

proud a player such as Curry was able to create a senior moment.

"They are the true warriors on the field, and everything they've done, because they put it on the field, they're the ones. On behalf of everybody at Ohio State, these seniors deserve to be thanked for what they've done, and certainly what they've done for me and my family and all of the coaches and for their brothers," he said. "That's why it was our obligation to make sure we did our best for them to make sure that their last game on the field was special. I think they had a great game and played hard. Guys like Caden Curry, what a great play he had. It was great to see them finish out senior day with a win like this."

Defensive tackle Tywone Malone Jr. tackled on three tackles for Ohio State, while Igbinosun and nickel back Lorenzo Styles Jr. each had one tackle and broke up one pass attempt.

On offense, Donaldson and wide receiver David Adolph were both productive in their senior days.

Donaldson had three carries for just 8 yards, but the senior took the last of those three totes in for a 5-yard touchdown run. Adolph totaled a career-high two catches for 23 yards.

Ohio State center Carson Hinzman said though he is always happy to see his teammates succeed, Senior Day is often bitter-sweet as it signifies the end of an era.

"On one hand, it's really good to see those guys simply at the highest level, but it's kind of sad because you've had our years here with them," Hinzman said. "I'm really grateful and blessed to be able to see those guys do their thing and hopefully see them go and excel at the next level."

All of Ohio State's 16 seniors were honored before the game. Each of the seniors listed above took part in the Buckeyes' Senior Day recognition. Also included in the celebration were Eli Brickhandler, Collin Johnson, Diante Griffin, Mason Maggs, Joey Velazquez, Ethan Onianwa, John Ferlmann, Will Kacmarek, and Jayden Fielding.

Without Stars, Jackson and Klare Shine in Rout

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

A total team effort was needed with several key pieces missing, and No. 1 Ohio State survived a worst-case scenario to pass its final test before The Game.

Without injured star receivers Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate, Julian Sayin still threw for two touchdowns and Bo Jackson ran for two more when the sometimes sluggish Buckeyes defeated Rutgers 42-9 in Ohio Stadium on Nov. 22 in front of a smallish crowd of 100,023 on a perfectly acceptable sunny 48-degree afternoon.

Sayin was 13 of 19 for 157 yards with tight end Max Klare (seven catches, 105 yards) as his favorite target. Jackson had 19 carries for 110 yards.

Tate missed his third straight game, and Smith also missed the game after he played three first-half series against UCLA on Nov. 15 before being pulled after making four catches for 40 yards.

There was no word on their availability when the Buckeyes play at No. 15 Michigan on Nov. 29, looking to end a four-game losing streak to the Wolverines and earn a spot in the Big Ten Championship Game.

The halftime score was 14-3 before the Buckeyes (11-0, 8-0 Big Ten) pulled away from Rutgers (5-6, 2-6), and the fans witnessed musical quarterbacks when Lincoln Kienholz and Sayin alternated plays during a second-half series.

Sluggish

Rutgers received the ball at the 25 off the opening kickoff and went three-and-out before punting to the OSU 27. Ohio State had a masterful drive mixing runs and passes – until Jackson fumbled into the end zone from the 1 for a touchback.

Sayin was 3 for 3 for 18 yards, all to tight ends, and Jackson had seven of the eight rushes for 51 yards, including runs of 13, 12, 14 and 10, the latter coming a play before the fumble.

The Scarlet Knights then gambled on fourth-and-1 from their 29 and lost when Antwan Raymond was stuffed for no gain by Caden Curry and Jaylen McClain.

On third-and-6 from the 25, Rutgers was called for holding as Sayin scrambled to the sideline for a 3-yard loss. On the next snap from the 15, Jackson used a hole at the line to burst through then cut left and raced 15 yards to make it 7-0 at 4:01. The drive needed three plays and 1:46 off the clock, and in two possessions, Sayin had yet to target a wide receiver.

The Scarlet Knights made it 7-3 on a 44-yard field goal by Jai Patel at 11:50 of the second quarter to finish off a 15-play drive that consumed 7:11 and featured three third-down and one fourth-down conversions.

Rutgers was driving at the end of the first quarter with KJ Duff's 12-yard catch on a third down, needing 10 yards, placing the ball at the Rutgers 49. After a 5-yard run, Curry sacked Athan Kaliakmanis for 5 yards on the final play of the first quarter.

Kaliakmanis ran for 5 on the first play of the second quarter, and on fourth down from the OSU 46, Jermaine Mathews Jr.



SONNY BROCKWAY

HIGH MARKS — Without injured star receivers Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate, former Purdue tight end Max Klare (86) had his most productive game as a Buckeye with seven catches for 105 yards and a touchdown against Rutgers. A 25-yard gain was highlighted by hurdling a defender for a few extra yards.

was called for pass interference at the 41 for a fresh set of downs.

Later, graduate cornerback Lorenzo Styles Jr. appeared to injure his right shoulder attempting to make a tackle on Kenny Fletcher Jr. that resulted in a 4-yard gain to the 26. That's where the possession stalled.

The Buckeyes followed with a three-and-out that included the first target of a wide receiver on their 16th play – an incompleteness to Brandon Inniss.

On their next possession, OSU got the ball after Jakob Anderson's 65-yard punt and roll to the 2.

The Buckeyes went the distance in 11 plays and 6:50 and got a massive break on a Rutgers penalty to go up 14-3 with 2:27 left in the half.

At the start, on third down from the 6, wide receiver David Adolph made a catch for 9 yards to move the chains. Later, an outlet pass in the backfield to Jackson gained 14 yards to the Buckeye 29.

Klare followed with a 39-yard catch-and-run to the Rutgers 32. Facing a fourth-and-2 from the 24, the Buckeyes took a timeout

with 3:20 left to set up a play with Kienholz replacing Sayin.

His pass to Bennett Christian was broken up, but Bradley Weaver was called for roughing the passer, moving the ball to the 12. Kienholz stayed in, and Isaiah West ran for 5.

Sayin returned, and Inniss made a toe-tapping catch in the right corner of the end zone.

Rutgers was able to extend a drive as the clock wound down. On third-and-10 from the 37, Davison Igbinosun made an interception at the OSU 25, but Eddrick Houston was flagged for a personal foul, giving the Scarlet Knights a first at the OSU 48 with 1:33 left, but they ended up punting.

The Buckeyes totaled 175 yards in the first half (95 passing, 80 rushing), and Rutgers had 76 (43 passing, 33 rushing). Sayin was 9 for 12 for 95 yards, with Klare making four catches for 57 yards. Jackson netted 62 yards on 11 carries.

Steady

The second half started poorly for the

Buckeyes when Inniss fielded the kickoff at the 21 and lateraled wildly to James Peoples, who was able to gather the ball and be downed at the 9.

Jackson, on the first snap, ran for 13, and two plays later, Adolph had a 14-yard reception, but that was it, and Joe McGuire's punt was downed at the 1.

It paid off when Curry had a strip-sack of 11 yards and recovered the fumble at the 1.

From there, CJ Donaldson Jr. was stopped for no gain, a holding penalty moved the ball back to the 11, and Sayin threw an incompleteness to bring up third down.

Sayin took advantage of blown coverage to find Klare open at the goal line for the easy score to make it 21-3 at 7:00. It goes into the books as a 1-yard drive taking three plays and 40 seconds.

Following Rutgers' punt to the OSU 30, Jackson opened with a 15-yard run, and Klare had a 25-yard catch. On third-and-9 from the 26, a defensive pass interference put the ball on the 11.

From the 10 on second down, Jackson followed a convoy to the left, made contact at the 2 and bulled his way in to make it 28-3 at the 2:30 mark. The drive was seven plays in 3:36.

Kienholz took over with 57 seconds left in the third after a Rutgers punt and had runs of 6 and 9 yards to end the quarter. Sayin then returned for a play before Kienholz on a bootleg rambled for 22 to the Knight 33, and West took off for 28 on the next play as the QBs alternated.

After a Kienholz incompleteness, Donaldson ran for a 5-yard TD that was not determined until a review overturned the call on the field of being down at the 1 for a 35-3 score at 11:39 of the fourth quarter.

It was fortunate for the Buckeyes because Phillip Daniels was called for an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty after the play, which was enforced on the kickoff.

Raymond rushed for a 1-yard TD with 6:43 left to make it 35-9, and Devin Sanchez intercepted a two-point try. The 71-yard drive was eight plays in 4:51.

Peoples ran for a 49-yard touchdown with 4:17 left to make it the 42-9 final. During the four-play, 75-yard, 2:26 series, tight end Jelani Thurman had a 19-yard reception.

Rutgers was stopped on downs at its 46, and Kienholz took two knees for a combined loss of 4 yards to end the game.

Notes

Ohio State totaled 430 yards (176 passing, 254 rushing) with 25 first downs. Rutgers gained 147 yards (81 passing, 66 rushing) and 12 firsts. ... Kienholz was 1 for 3 for 19 yards and ran for 37 yards on three carries. Peoples had three runs for 55 yards and West 48 on eight rushes. ... Adolph had three catches for 23 yards, both career highs. ... Kaliakmanis was 10 of 20 for 81 yards. ... Curry had six tackles (four solo) to lead the Buckeyes and two of the four sacks. ... This was the seventh time this season OSU held its opponent under 10 points.

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 42, Rutgers 9

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on how his team played without star receivers Jeremiah Smith or Carnell Tate: "I thought the guys played hard today. The running game averaged just under 7 yards per carry, and then on 35 rushing attempts, we held them to 66 yards. That was really well done. They came out fresh and had a couple of things for us that were a little bit different coming off the off week, but I thought our guys handled it, again, sort of businesslike. Overall, that was well done."

Junior tight end Max Klare on stepping up with Smith and Tate sidelined: "I think I came through for the most part. There are obviously a couple of (plays) that I want back. There's a lot of room for improvement for me. I just have to keep building on that and keep growing each week."

Klare on his comfort in the offense and how that has changed since the beginning of the season: "I feel a lot more comfortable. I'm just more comfortable with my role, what I'm doing and what I'm asked to do. I just have to keep growing."

Day on redshirt freshman wide receiver Mylan Graham not playing much in the first half: "He played a little bit. When he gets in there, obviously, we want him to be consistent and do his job, and so we're challenging him to do that and step up in a big way. The more he does that, the more he builds trust, the more opportunities he will get."

Day on how the run game has grown this season: "You've seen a lot of progress throughout the year. You've seen guys get better, and every time these running backs touch the ball, they're getting better. You've seen a lot of progress being made, and now we have to be at our best."

Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano on his decision to go for it on fourth-and-1 from his own territory in the first half:



SONNY BROCKWAY

HERE COMES TROUBLE — Rutgers quarterback Athan Kaliakmanis doesn't know what is about to hit him when defensive end Caden Curry (92) closes in for one of his two sacks.

"Well, I thought it was going to be a game where we had to be aggressive, knowing how good they are. But we felt like the risk was worth the reward because we needed to keep the drive alive, and we did. .. We didn't then, but there were some things that we did that kept the ball in our hands and kept the clock moving again. There was a plan to try to get it into the fourth quarter and go win it, and we just came up a little short."

Senior defensive end Caden Curry on his strip-sack and fumble recovery: "I definitely thought I got in the end zone. I got off the ball well. I knew it was a pass, so I got off and hit the play. My number was called, and I tried to capitalize on it."

Klare on what it's like to play on a team with a defense as good as Ohio State's: "It's definitely special to have a defense like that. It only helps us. We have so much confidence in them and what they're able to do on a week-to-week basis. That gives us confidence to just go out there and let it loose."

Curry on what it means to finish strong on Senior Day: "To go out strong, it definitely means something (to me). I've had so many great games in the stadium, so to finish strong is something I'll always have in the back of my head. It's something I'll be able to show my kids when I'm older."

Curry on potentially playing in Ohio Stadium for the final time: "It's kind of heartbreaking and motivating at the same time. To be able to play out here – it's the best stadium to play at in America. To be able to give my all and be a Buckeye is something I'll always remember. But it motivates me because we have so much more to play (for), so much else to do, and so much else to accomplish."

Junior defensive end Kenyatta Jackson Jr. on what it would mean to beat Michigan: "It's really important. (I have) lost to that team three years in a row. Personally, I can't go out like that in my senior year."

Day on how Ohio State is shifting its focus to Michigan: "We're excited about this one, and we just need to focus on what really matters. That's everybody just doing their job and going on the road in what's going to be a great environment, and going and getting it done. That will be the focus, and we'll continue to do what we've done all year. That's it. Have a great week and focus on that day. It's the coaches' job to give them a great plan. We have to be at our best, everybody has to be at their best and play really, really hard."

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The Numbers Game

Ohio State 42, Rutgers 9

Nov. 22, 2025 – Ohio Stadium, Columbus, Ohio

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
RUTGERS	0	3	0	6	9
OHIO STATE	7	7	14	14	42

First Quarter

OSU – Jackson, 15-yard rush (Fielding kick), 4:01.

Second Quarter

RU – Patel, 44-yard field goal, 11:50.

OSU – Inniss, 7-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 2:27.

Third Quarter

OSU – Klare, 11-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 7:00.

OSU – Jackson, 10-yard rush (Fielding kick), 2:30.

Fourth Quarter

OSU – Donaldson Jr., 5-yard rush (Fielding kick), 11:39.

RU – Raymond, 1-yard rush (Kaliakmanis pass failed), 6:43.

OSU – Peoples, 49-yard rush (Fielding kick), 4:17.

Att. – 100,023

Weather – Sunny, 49 F

Team Statistics		
	RU	OSU
First Downs	12	25
Rushing	6	12
Passing	3	10
Penalty	3	3
Rushes-Yards	35-66	38-254
Passing Yards	81	176
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	10-20-0	14-22-0
Offensive Plays	55	60
Total Net Yards	147	430
Third Down Efficiency	5-14	3-6
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-2	0-0
Punts-Avg.	5-47.4	2-43.0
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	3-1
Penalties	4-37	5-60
Time of Possession	27:11	32:49

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – RU: Raymond 15-52; Benjamin 7-21; Brown V 7-16; A. Kaliakmanis 6-(-23). **OSU:** Jackson 19-110; Peoples 3-55; West 8-48; Kienholz 3-37; Donaldson Jr. 3-8; Team 2-(-4).

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – RU: A. Kaliakmanis 10-20-0-81-0. **OSU:** Sayin 13-19-0-157-2; Kienholz 1-3-0-19-0.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – RU: Duff 2-34; Fletcher Jr. 4-20; Sheffield 2-18; Strong 1-9; Raymond 1-0.

OSU: Klare 7-105; Adolph 2-23; Thurman 1-19; Jackson 1-14; Inniss 2-10; Christian 1-5.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – RU: Anderson 5-47.4-65. **OSU:** McGuire 2-43.0-44.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – RU: None. **OSU:** None.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – RU: Black 1-15. **OSU:** Inniss 1-(-14).

FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds.) – RU: Djabome 1-0. **OSU:** Curry 1-0.

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

SACKS (No.-Yds.) – RU: None. **OSU:** Curry 2-16; Downs 1-8; Houston 0.5-4; Styles 0.5-3.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – RU: Weaver 1.5-4; Djabome 1-2; O'Neill 1-2; Wright 0.5-1. **OSU:** Curry 2-16; Downs 1-8; Pettijohn 1-1; Houston 0.5-4; Styles 0.5-3.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst-Tot.) – RU: Mascoe 5-4-9; Djabome 5-4-9; Wright 2-5-7; Elad 4-3-7; Henderson 5-0-5; Robinson 3-1-4; Sanders 1-3-4; Miller 1-1-2; Thompson 2-0-2; Weaver 1-1-2; O'Neill 0-2-2; Insinga 1-0-1; Angoy 0-1-1; Gnago 0-1-1; Griffin 1-0-1. **OSU:** Curry 4-2-6; Styles 3-2-5; Pierce 3-2-5; Delane 2-2-4; McClain 3-1-4; Downs 3-0-3; Smith Jr. 2-1-3; Malone 1-2-3; McDonald 0-3-3; Sanchez 2-0-2; West 1-1-2; Roker 2-0-2; Houston 1-1-2; Jackson Jr. 1-1-2; Igbinosun 1-0-1; Styles Jr. 0-1-1; Scott Jr. 0-1-1; Mathews Jr. 1-0-1; Reese 0-1-1; Atkinson 0-1-1; Grady 1-0-1; Pettijohn 1-0-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME – RU: Sheffield, Fletcher Jr., A. Kaliakmanis, Raymond, White, Needham, G. Zilinskas, Felter, Asamoah, Duff, Strong, Henderson, Thompson, Mascoe, Sanders, Angoy, Wright, Miller, Djabome, Elad, Weaver, O'Neill, Walker, Surace, Blake, McClary, Degraffenreidt, Williams, Ofurie, Johnson, Weber, Black, Joines, Benjamin, Salaam, McCann, Clawges, Brown V, Robinson II, Insinga, Noel, Archie, Ward, Robinson, Patel, H. Zilinskas, Cooper, Kadow, Stone, Salami, Giwa, Cesaire, D. Kaliakmanis, Higgins, Gnago, Abdou, Scullion, Anderson, Griffin, Billotte, O'Connor. **OSU:** Inniss, Sayin, Rodgers, Jackson, Montgomery, Siereveld, Daniels, Hinzman, Tshabola, Adolph, Christian, Styles, Igbinosun, McClain, Downs, Styles Jr., Mathews Jr., Reese, Curry, Malone, Jackson Jr., McDonald, Delane, West, Donaldson Jr., Lockhart, Atkinson, Thurman, Grady, Nelson Jr., Alford, Woods, Pettijohn, Peoples, Jones, Stover, Pierce, Roker, Kienholz, West, Johnson, Fielding, Velazquez, McGuire, Ferlmann, Rudzinski, Scott Jr., Graham, Mickens, Smith Jr., Kema, Van Sickle, Sanchez, Terry, Moore, Onianwa, Roberts, Klare, Kacmarek, 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	W, 42-9	100,023
Nov. 29	(1) at Michigan (15)	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	259	140
Rushing	103	61
Passing	144	62
Penalty	12	17
Average Per Game/Rush	170.2	80.0
Average Per Game/Pass	270.1	126.6
Total Offense	4843	2273
Total Plays	695	605
Average Per Game	440.3	206.6
Average Per Play	7.0	3.8
Penalties-Yards	48-437	33-343
Fumbles-Lost	7-3	8-6
Third Down Efficiency	63-113	40-140
Percentage	56%	29%
Fourth Down Efficiency	9-13	9-25
Percentage	69%	36%
Sacks-Yards	29-206	6-39
Time Of Possession Avg.	33:30	26:37

Score								
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.	
Ohio State	82	120	104	111	0	417	37.9	
Opponents	6	26	23	29	0	84	7.6	

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Bo Jackson	129	835	6.5	5	64
James Peoples	61	344	5.6	3	49
CJ Donaldson Jr.	75	286	3.8	10	27
Isaiah West	50	286	5.7	2	38
Lincoln Kienholz	11	66	6.0	2	22
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	13	-27	-2.1	0	0
OSU Totals	378	1872	5.0	24	64
OPP Totals	330	880	2.7	4	34

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Julian Sayin	239	301	79.4	2832	27-4	185.4
L. Kienholz	11	14	78.6	139	1-0	185.5
Tavien St. Clair	0	2	0.0	0	0-0	0.0
OSU Totals	250	317	78.9	2971	28-4	184.2
OPP Totals	166	275	60.4	1393	5-6	104.5

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Jeremiah Smith	69	902	13.1	10	87
Carnell Tate	39	711	18.2	7	57
Max Klare	38	400	10.5	2	39
Brandon Inniss	29	220	7.6	2	29
Bo Jackson	13	138	10.6	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	7	84	12.0	1	26
Bryson Rodgers	6	79	13.2	1	21
Mylan Graham	6	93	15.5	0	23
Bennett Christian	5	16	3.2	1	6
Quincy Porter	4	59	14.8	0	22
Nate Roberts	4	30	7.5	0	15
David Adolph	3	31	10.3	0	14
Isaiah West	2	12	6.0	0	12
OSU Totals	250	2971	11.9	28	87
OPP Totals	166	1393	8.4	5	67

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Jayden Fielding	-	50-50	-	-	13-15	89
Jeremiah Smith	11	-	-	-	-	66
CJ Donaldson Jr.	11	-	-	-	-	66
Carnell Tate	7	-	-	-	-	42
Bo Jackson	6	-	-	-	-	36

James Peoples	3	-	-	-	-	18
Brandon Inniss	2	-	-	-	-	12
Will Kacmarek	2	-	-	-	-	12
Lincoln Kienholz	2	-	-	-	-	12
Max Klare	2	-	-	-	-	12
Isaiah West	2	-	-	-	-	12
Lorenzo Styles Jr.	1	-	-	-	-	6
Bennett Christian	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	54	54-54	-	-	13-15	417
OPP Totals	9	6-7	-	-	8-10	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	3-4	0-0	8-10

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Joe McGuire	19	798	42.0	0	55
Nick McLarty	1	45	45.0	0	45
OSU Totals	20	843	42.2	0	55
OPP Totals	59	2697	45.7	1	65

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	4	43	10.8	0	37
Lorenzo Styles Jr.	1	100	100.0	1	100
OSU Totals	5	145	29.0	1	100
OPP Totals	15	257	17.1	0	41

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Sonny Styles	35	27	62	4.0-8	0.5-3
Arvell Reese	30	29	59	10.0-45	6.5-41
Caleb Downs	32	17	49	5.0-13	1.0-8
Caden Curry	30	19	49	13.5-70	9.0-64
Kayden McDonald	25	22	47	8.0-28	3.0-20
Payton Pierce	20	20	40	1.5-2	0-0
Jaylen McClain	32	7	39	0-0	0-0
Davison Igbinosun	19	15	34	0.5-0	0-0
Lorenzo Styles Jr.	14	11	25	1.5-1	0-0
K. Jackson Jr.	12	9	21	8.0-42	4.5-35
Tywayne Malone	9	11	20	0-0	0-0
J. Mathews Jr.	13	5	18	1.5-7	1.0-6
Will Smith Jr.	9	9	18	0-0	0-0
Eddrick Houston	4	9	13	2.5-12	1.5-10
Zion Grady	7	5	12	2.0-12	1.0-10
Faheem Delane	6	6	12	1.0-1	0-0
Devin Sanchez	9	3	12	0-0	0-0
Beau Atkinson	3	8	11	2.5-12	1.0-9
Riley Pettijohn	3	6	9	1.0-1	0-0
Bryce West	6	3	9	0-0	0-0
Aaron Scott Jr.	6	2	8	1.0-5	0-0
Leroy Roker	5	2	7	0-0	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
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

George Runs Into History Against Illini

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 41-3 win over Illinois on Nov. 11, 1995, in Ohio Stadium.

By MIKE WACHSMAN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When Eddie George woke up on the morning of Nov. 11, 1995, he was just another in a long line of excellent running backs who had played at Ohio State.

By the time he went to bed that same evening – assuming he did – he was a record-holder, an all-timer, at the top of the rushing mountain previously occupied by some of the biggest names in OSU and college football history.

George blistered what was thought to be a stout Illinois run defense and ended the day with a school-best 314 yards with three touchdowns. That Ohio State won the game 41-3 in Ohio Stadium was a tad surprising, but George's performance took center stage.

George did his damage on a robust 36 carries, and his yardage broke the old record of 274 yards, set by Keith Byars against – coincidentally – Illinois in 1984. There had been numerous 200-yard games by a back at Ohio State, including two by George – 219 against Michigan State in 1994 and 212 against Washington earlier in the 1995 season.

But this was the first 300-yard game in school history and just the sixth in Big Ten annals.

It's no wonder that fans were chanting "Eddie! Eddie" and "Heisman! Heisman!" as the clock hit triple zero.

"I'm not really too concerned about the Heisman right now," George said. "I'm more concerned how we're going to get to the Rose Bowl and how we're going to finish up as a team. That's the most important thing right now."

There were some bewildering moments for George on the sideline as he was approaching the school record as well as the 300-yard mark.

"I wasn't aware until someone told me on the sideline that I needed 20 yards to get 300," George said. "I didn't even know I had broken the record. I was wondering what everybody was screaming about."

The game, played in muddy, rainy, cold conditions, was a walk in the park for the Buckeyes almost from the outset. Ohio State led 17-0 at halftime, but the second 30 minutes was when George truly got cranked up.

After Illinois got on the board early in the third quarter on a field goal, George took a handoff and went left, exploded through a gaping hole created by tackle Orlando Pace, and was off to the races on a 64-yard scoring jaunt. It put the Buckeyes up 24-3, and any faint hope the Illini might have had about getting back into the game faded as George crossed the goal line.

"That was just a lead play, '27 Lead,' " George said. "I just ran what I saw."

George broke Byars' record on a 3-yard plunge, giving him 275 yards for the day.

One play later, he took a pitch – left again – and carried an Illini defender into the end zone for a 13-yard touchdown and a 31-3 lead with just over three minutes to play in the third quarter.

But George was not done.

After an OSU interception put the ball at the Illini 10, quarterback Bobby Hoying dropped back and lofted a second-down pass to the back of the end zone, where George managed to cradle it and get one foot down for the score. That put the Buckeyes up 38-3 with less than a minute to play in the third, and it was all over but the shouting.

"Bob told me in the huddle he was going to throw me the ball," George said. "He threw it, but I lost it in the lights. I found it and was barely able to get one foot inbounds."

Illinois entered the game ranked first in the Big Ten against the run and among the nation's top 15 units in that category. They brought formidable linebackers Simeon Rice and Kevin Hardy to Ohio Stadium, and as winners of four straight over the Buckeyes, they were understandably confident.

So it should not have been a surprise that the Buckeyes' smiles were extra wide after the game.

"That's unheard of," guard Jamie Sumner said. "That's kind of like our Heisman Trophy, for us to do that against their defense. That's a big honor for us. Eddie circled us all together and said, 'It was all you guys.' We would bend over backward for Eddie. I'm so thrilled for him."

Offensive coordinator Joe Hollis, who admittedly buttoned up the game plan due to the conditions and the fact that OSU was without receiver Terry Glenn, was impressed with the way his troops executed.

"When you run for more than 400 yards against Illinois, I don't know that you can play much better up front," Hollis said. "They felt all week they had to set the tempo, and they did that. Those guys were on a mission today."

Illinois head coach Lou Tepper had an excellent vantage point on George's accomplishments as the senior ran past the Illinoi bench on a number of big runs.

"Eddie George was just spectacular, very impressive," Tepper said. "I didn't think our defensive game plan was a good one, and our defensive players didn't execute very well. Eddie George had a lot to do with that."

The saying is that no great back can operate without a great offensive line opening holes for him, and on this day, the Buckeye front rated favorably with Fordham's storied Seven Blocks of Granite.

They repeatedly pushed Illini defenders back, which allowed George to pick and choose which hole he ran through.

"With the line that we have and the attitude we had approaching this game, anything was possible," George said. "We just wanted to go out and establish the running game and try to win the surest way."

While George did not want to talk about the Heisman Trophy, preferring to stay focused on team accomplishments, his teammates were more than happy to pump up his campaign.

"Eddie is the man right now," Hoying said. "After what he did today, he has got to be the front-runner."

George was battling Nebraska's Tommie Frazier and Florida's Danny Wuerffel for the trophy, and though there were still games to play, much of the sentiment seemed to float in George's direction.

"We probably gave him the Heisman today," Illinois defensive coordinator Denney Marcin said. "I've been coaching for 32 years, and I've never seen a back do that."

The success that Illinois had had in recent years against Ohio State had created a narrative that maybe the Buckeyes' time as an unbeaten would come to an end, even as the Illini came into the contest with just a .500 mark.

Illinois was challenged offensively, and though Hardy and Rice were All-America caliber players, they could not do it alone. Ohio State not having Glenn in the lineup should have made it easier to defend, but sometimes the other team just executes at a level where nothing can be done to stop it.

"It was kind of hard to hear," defensive end Matt Finkes said. "On ESPN, they were talking all about Illinois and not at all about us. I think that gave us a little extra incentive."

OSU coach John Cooper was effusive in his praise of the offense in general and George specifically.

"When we lined up there at the goal line and Eddie was having the kind of success he was having just running inside, outside, run-

ning over people, a lot of time we just had good blocking," Cooper said. "A few of the plays were not really well-blocked or well-executed. The credit goes to Eddie George. I think that's probably the finest individual effort I've ever seen out of a running back."

"I was excited. How can you not be excited for a guy who just broke the school record? Look at all of the great backs we've had here."

It was a full-circle moment for George, who got his first real action at Ohio State as a freshman against Illinois in the 1992 season.

He fumbled twice, both leading to touchdowns, and was in the doghouse for the remainder of the season. Illinois ate at him. Maybe not as much as rival Michigan did, but it was tangible.

George did not like the Illini, and after OSU suffered a 24-10 defeat to the Orange and Blue in 1994, it became paramount that the outcome of the 1995 game be reversed. When he took off his helmet at midfield after the game and took in the moment, George felt satisfied.

"Illinois has always been in the back of my mind, starting with my freshman year," George said. "But it's no vindication. That was three years ago. It has nothing to do with now. I'm just happy to finally beat Illinois."




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U-M Enters The Game With Plenty At Stake

By **GREG WILSON**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

After beating Maryland 45-20 on Nov. 22, Michigan comes into the rivalry game against the Buckeyes with just two losses and only one in the Big Ten.

That means that the Wolverines are coming into this game with more motivation than simply being a spoiler for the Buckeyes. Both teams have a possible spot in the Big Ten Championship Game on the line.

Not only that, but if Michigan can pull off its fifth straight victory over Ohio State on Nov. 29, it likely has a very good chance at getting back into the College Football Playoff after missing out last season with a 7-5 record in the regular season.

Since the Wolverines can't afford another loss if they want to get there, they weren't looking past the Terrapins leading up to the game.

"Everybody knows what's ahead, but we've got to go prepare for this one like our lives depend on it," head coach Sherrone Moore said. "It's a playoff game for us in this building. There's no trap game with this one."

After the way the season went last year for Michigan, even with the fact that the Wolverines were able to beat their archrivals, Moore was just pleased that their late-season games meant something going into the game against the Terrapins.

"We're 8-2. All our goals are in front of us," Moore said. "We're playing for a lot. We're playing meaningful football in November, which is what you ask for as a football coach."

When it comes to how Michigan has won games this season, it hasn't always looked pretty, but it has been able to win nonetheless.

That starts with the \$12 million man, true freshman Bryce Underwood, who certainly has had some growing pains this year while also flashing the impressive traits and talent that made him the No. 1 overall recruit in the 2025 recruiting class.

The Wolverines' first loss of the season came at Oklahoma, Moore's alma mater, on Sept. 6, which was the first time they were tested as a team after opening with New Mexico at home and beating the Lobos 34-17.

Against the Sooners' defense, which has since proved to be one of the best in the country, Underwood was 9 of 24 passing for 142 yards, and he was sacked once. At that point in the season, Underwood had not yet started to run the ball as much as he has this

year afterward.

But it hasn't just been great defenses that Underwood has struggled against. When Michigan played Michigan State in East Lansing on Oct. 25, Underwood had possibly his toughest outing of the season against a Spartan team that still has zero wins in its Big Ten schedule.

He was 8 of 17 passing for just 86 yards through the air with no touchdowns, running the ball five times for 26 yards and a score on the ground. But even then, Moore was still confident that the freshman would figure it out at some point.

"I don't think it has anything to do with Bryce's ability or the receivers' ability," Moore said Oct. 27. "I trust them. I think they're really good and we will be complete, and we're going to go try to win games."

It's entirely possible that now, with nearly a full season of development, Underwood could be peaking at the right time in terms of how good he will be as a freshman. Against the Terrapins, he was 16 of 23 through the air for 215 yards and two touchdowns while running the ball eight times for 20 yards total.

Running the ball has been the biggest strength of the Michigan offense, by far. With transfer Justice Haynes and Jordan Marshall both proving to be great backs for the Wolverines, they are 10th in the country as a team, running for 223.5 yards per game.

But Haynes was injured late in the season and is not expected to be available against the Buckeyes on Nov. 29, while Marshall was out against Maryland.

In that game, it was walk-on running back Bryson Kuzdzal who carried the load, and he ran for 100 yards on 20 totes (5.0 yards per carry) and scored three touchdowns. He helped the Wolverines rush for 200-plus yards as a team for the fourth straight game.

"There's a standard of being a running back at Michigan, and there's a standard of being a football player that you have to play to, and he played to that standard today," Moore said of Kuzdzal after the game. "He ran hard, ran physical and ran tough. It's a true credit to him, being a walk-on. The trust factor we have with him is so big."

Marshall is expected to be able to play against Ohio State by game time, but Kuzdzal proved to be a good backup option if he should be needed.

Underwood will be throwing the ball to wide receivers Andrew Marsh, Donaven McCulley and Semaj Morgan. Marsh leads the group this season with 42 catches for 641 yards and three touchdowns, with McCulley not far behind at 32 catches for 488 yards

Get To Know ... Michigan

- **2025 Record:** 9-2, 7-1 Big Ten.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Pro spread; Defensive Formation – Multiple 4-2-5; Starters returning – Offense 3, Defense 5, Specialists 1.
- **Head Coach:** Sherrone Moore, 2nd year at Michigan, 17-7.
- **Series History:** 121st meeting; Michigan leads 62-52-6.
- **School Facts:** Location – Ann Arbor, Mich.; Enrollment – 52,065; Nickname – Wolverines; Colors – Maize and Blue; Conference – Big Ten; Stadium – Michigan Stadium (Surface – FieldTurf; Capacity – 107,601).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Jordan Marshall	143	871	6.1	10
Bryce Underwood	68	322	4.7	5
Bryson Kuzdzal	45	206	4.6	4

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Bryce Underwood	171-275	62.2	2,166	9-5

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Andrew Marsh	42	641	15.3	3
D. McCulley	32	488	15.3	3
Marlin Klein	19	209	11.0	1
Semaj Morgan	19	214	11.3	1

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game – 29.3
Rushing Yards Per Game – 223.5
Passing Yards Per Game – 196.9
Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 420.4

2025 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Aug. 30	New Mexico	W, 34-17
Sept. 6	at Oklahoma	L, 24-13
Sept. 13	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	W, 63-3
Sept. 20	at Nebraska	W, 30-27
Oct. 4	WISCONSIN	W, 24-10
Oct. 11	at USC	L, 31-13
Oct. 18	WASHINGTON	W, 24-7
Oct. 25	at Michigan State	W, 31-20
Nov. 1	PURDUE	W, 21-16
Nov. 15	at Northwestern	W, 24-22
Nov. 22	at Maryland	W, 45-20
Nov. 29	OHIO STATE	Noon

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Ernest Hausmann	44	24	68	5.5-22	1-7
Jimmy Rolder	37	20	57	5.5-27	2-21
Brandyn Hillman	25	16	41	2.5-2	0-0
TJ Metcalf	29	12	41	2.5-5	0-0
Mason Curtis	19	14	33	1.5-12	1-12

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD
Cole Sullivan	3	8	2.7	0
Mason Curtis	1	14	14.0	0
T.J. Guy	1	0	0	0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed – 17.9
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 94.0
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 208.5
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 302.5

and three scores.

Tight end Marli Klein has also been a part of the pass-catching game with 19 receptions for 209 yards and one touchdown.

On the offensive line, the Wolverines will likely start left tackle Evan Link, left guard Giovanni El-Hadi and center Greg Crippen, all three of whom are returning starters, as well as right guard Brady Norton and right tackle Andrew Sprague.

They have done fairly well in pass protection, allowing 17 sacks for 87 yards, but where they excel is in the run-blocking game.

As always, Michigan's defense is one of the better units in the country. Defensive coordinator Wink Martindale has led the Wolverines to No. 15 in scoring defense through 11 games with just 17.9 points allowed per game and 17th in the country in total defense, giving up 302.5 yards per game.

The worst game the defense had was when Michigan went to Los Angeles to play USC and gave up 31 points to the talented Trojans' offense while only scoring 13. The Wolverines gave up 489 yards of total offense in the game (265 passing, 224 rushing).

Martindale said that game was somewhat of a wake-up call for the defense.

"We keep bringing that up. It was a bad game. I think that you're going to have a bad game. Better early than late. We had too many missed tackles," he said. "I think that it's one of those things, you find out the true character of who you're coaching and who you're coaching with. And you just got to go back to work. And that's what makes this game so great, is seeing those type of challenges after those type of games."

In the trenches on the defensive side of the ball are edge rushers Jaishawn Barham and Derrick Moore, both of whom are re-

turning starters from last season. Barham made the move from outside linebacker to the edge this season, and it has worked out very well for him and the Wolverines. Barham has 10 tackles for loss and four sacks, and he has added three pass breakups and five quarterback hurries.

At linebacker are Ernest Hausmann and Jimmy Rolder, the two leading tacklers on the team with 68 and 57, respectively.

In the defensive backfield are cornerbacks Jyaire Hill and Zeke Berry, with TJ Metcalf operating as the nickel back. Hill is a player whom Martindale has seen major improvements from over the course of the season.

"The guy has just grown up right in front of our eyes as far as a player, and he loves football," Martindale said. "And you can just see the way that he plays the game. He has confidence. He's to the point now in his career that if he gives up a reception, he gets mad, and that's right where you like your corners."

At safety are Jaden Mangham and Brandyn Hillman, with longtime Wolverine Rod Moore backing them up, though Moore has dealt with injuries this season again after being the hero in the 2023 version of The Game with a late interception of Kyle McCord.

Michigan and Ohio State both have plenty at stake in this game. The Buckeyes trying to end a four-game losing streak to U-M, and the Wolverines are hoping to both keep that going and make it to Indianapolis for the Big Ten Championship Game. That will all be played out on the field on Nov. 29 when the Buckeyes head to Ann Arbor.

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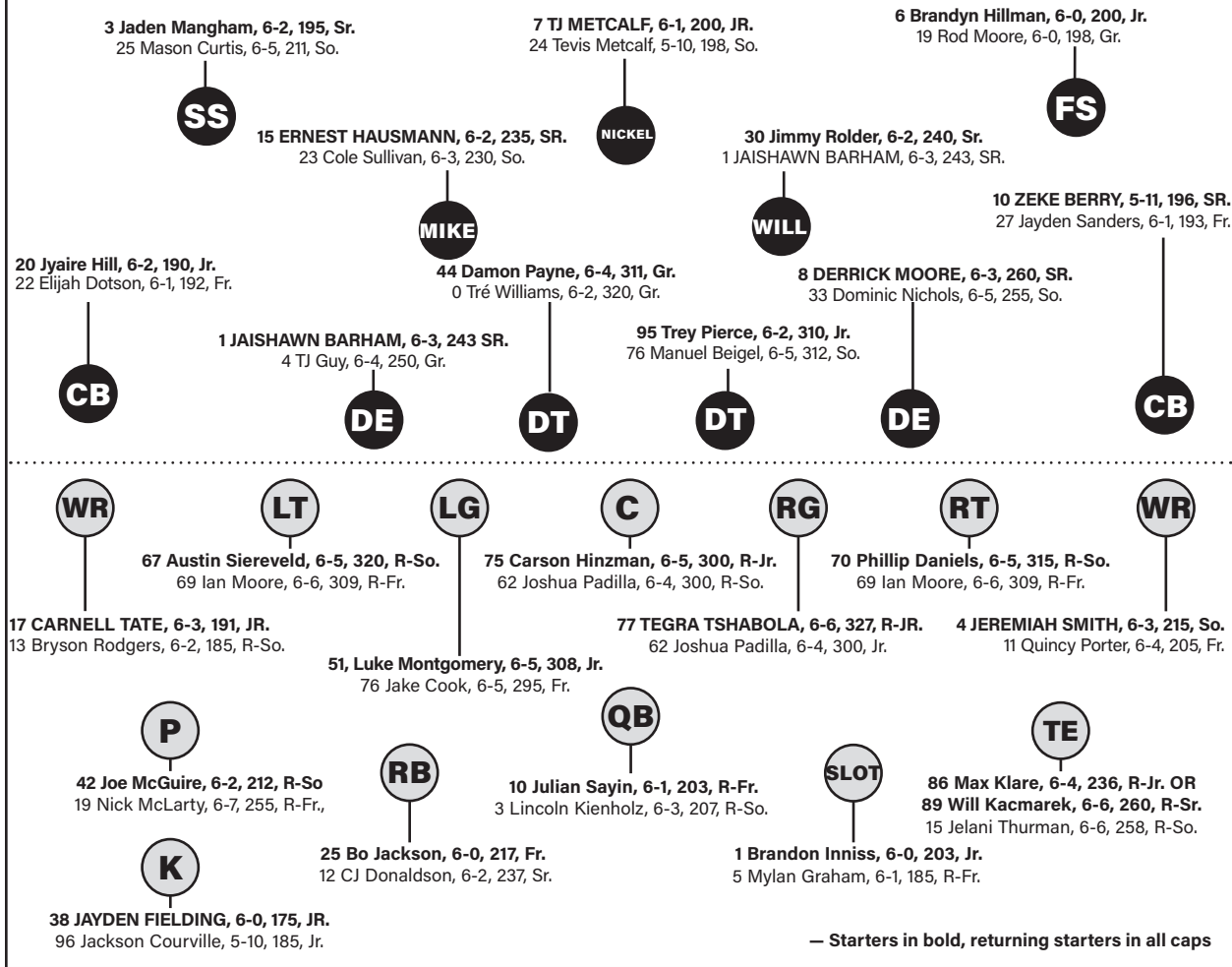
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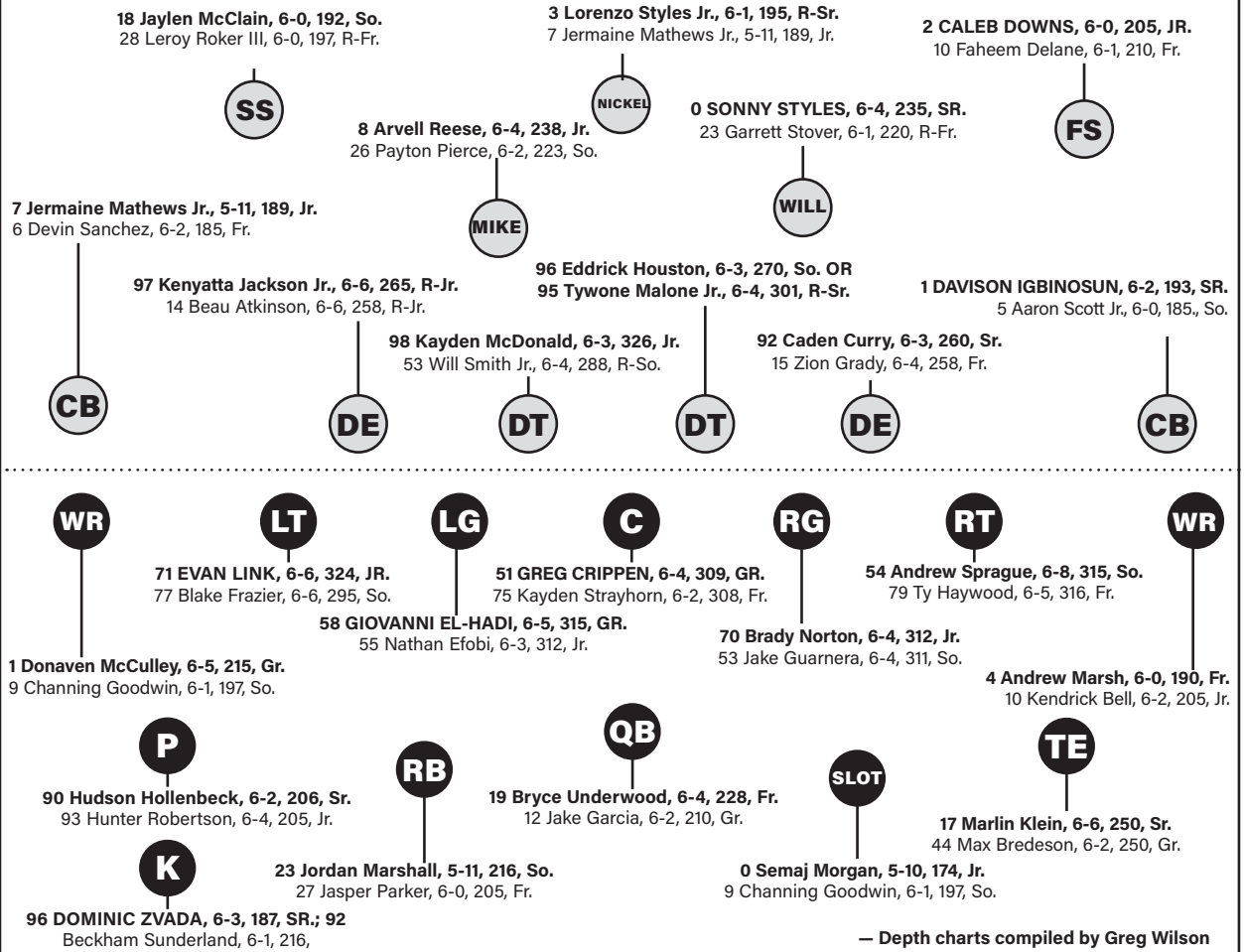


Projected Depth Charts

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



WHEN MICHIGAN HAS THE BALL...



How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs.
MICHIGAN RUSH DEFENSE

There are two constants in this space every season: the warning in previewing the openers that stats from the previous season don't hold much weight, and the annual reminder to throw numbers out the window when it comes to Ohio State-Michigan. By any measure, the Wolverines shouldn't have come within a sniff of winning last year, but here they are with a four-game winning streak in the rivalry. This year, it's hard to gauge the Buckeyes because of the uncertain availability of injured star receivers Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate. Both sat out the Rutgers game on Nov. 22, and the Buckeyes turned to the ground game for support with mixed results. Sure, the 254 yards on a 6.7 average per carry was good, but 49 were on a touchdown run by James Peoples late when backups permeated both sides of the ball. Bo Jackson ran for 110 yards and two scores on 19 carries, but worrisome is that he had negative yardage (9 yards total) on four of his first 14 runs. If the O-line can't handle one of the worst rushing defenses in the country, how are they going to match up against one of the better ones? Michigan entered its game against Maryland 12th nationally in rush defense (96.3) and allowed the Terrapins only 71 for a 2.8 average, even though Maryland had runs of 20 and 23 yards. **EDGE: EVEN**

MICHIGAN RUSH OFFENSE vs.
OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

U-M has a similar injury bug. Playing without top backs Justice Haynes and Jordan Marshall, the Wolverines still gained 228 yards (4.6). Former walk-on Bryson Kuzdzal ran 20 times for 100 yards (5.0) and three TDs. Tomas O'Meara popped for a 37-yarder and had 71 yards on an 8.9 average. The Buckeyes limited Rutgers to 66 yards (1.9), with the longest carry just 15 yards. There's no telling who will be carrying the ball for the Wolverines, but the OSU line will see its stiffest competition. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs.
MICHIGAN PASS DEFENSE

Julian Sayin had to look elsewhere without Smith and Tate, and he turned to Purdue transfer tight end Max Klare, who had his best game as a Buckeye with seven grabs off eight targets for 105 yards and a TD, including a 39-yarder. Wide receiver David Adolph had career highs for receptions (two) and yards (23). Sayin was 13 of 19 for 157 yards and two TDs. Lincoln Kienholz ran three times and threw three times, and he may get more opportunities against U-M. Maryland QB Malik Washington had been sacked three times all season before Michigan got to him thrice. However, Maryland passed for 276 yards and two scores, and the defense allowed eight plays of 15-plus yards, while six went for more than 20 yards. If at least one of Smith or Tate plays, the Buckeyes have the advantage. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

MICHIGAN PASS OFFENSE vs.
OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Freshman Bryce Underwood is developing at the right time and had a solid 16 of 23 for 215 yards and a pair of touchdowns against the Terps but was sacked twice. Andrew Marsh led the way with five catches for 76 yards and a touchdown. Ohio State harassed Rutgers quarterback Athan Kaliakmanis into 10 for 20 for 81 yards while sacking him four times. Caden Curry had two of them, including a strip-sack to set up a TD. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

SPECIAL TEAMS

Dominic Zvada was one of the best field-goal kickers for Michigan last season but is just 12 of 19 this season. He missed from 38 vs. Maryland to drop to 3 of 6 from 30-39 yards but later nailed a 46-yarder. The Buckeyes had a really poor attempt at a lateral on a kickoff when Brandon Inniss overthrew Peoples for a substantial loss. **EDGE: MICHIGAN**

INTANGIBLES

The Buckeyes did not look good in the first half again and don't know who will be lining up at wide receiver. If the odds were based on confidence and swagger, the betting line would heavily favor the Wolverines. They know they can beat Ohio State. There isn't a Buckeye player who has that feeling of winning The Game. **EDGE: MICHIGAN**

STAFF PREDICTION

This is such a crapshoot. It seems it will be easier for Michigan to replace injured backs than OSU to fill the shoes of Smith and Tate. The only way the Buckeyes can win if both are out is by having the defense play better than at any point this season and possibly add a touchdown. Otherwise, if the Buckeyes have to rely on the run game and if it gets smothered, it will be a very long afternoon in Ann Arbor and an even longer winter. **OHIO STATE 21, MICHIGAN 20**

Hubbard The Hero In 1967 Rivalry Game

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

The Super Sophomores are widely regarded as one of the best, if not the best, Ohio State football teams in history.

Led by Rex Kern, Leo Hayden, Jan White, John Brockington and many more impressive players on the offense, along with Jack Tatum, Jim Stillwagon, Mike Sensibaugh and Tim Anderson on the defensive side of the ball, head coach Woody Hayes led his 1968 team to an undefeated record and a national championship.

But before that season, there may have been a possibility that it wouldn't be Hayes leading the way on the sideline. Former Ohio State running back Rudy Hubbard was told by a good source that the legendary Buckeye coach might have had good reason to worry about his job during the 1967 season, Hubbard's senior year.

"(Former Ohio State assistant coach) George (Chaump) said that Woody had come to him and voiced that they might not get a chance to coach the team because he might be fired," Hubbard told BSB.

The Buckeyes started the 1967 season with a 2-3 record. They lost to Arizona 14-7 in the season opener on Sept. 30, fell 41-6 to Purdue on Oct. 14 and dropped another game against Illinois, 17-13, on Oct. 28.

With just four games left to go in the season, there was a lot on the line, even though OSU already knew it probably wouldn't be playing to get into the Rose Bowl.

But the Buckeyes were able to finish the year with four straight wins, beating Michigan State 21-7, Wisconsin 17-15 and Iowa 21-10 before going into Ann Arbor to take down Michigan 24-14 in a game that Hubbard says the Wolverines were expected to win by multiple scores.

"No question about it," said Hubbard when asked if the win over Michigan saved Hayes' job. "That's what George Chaump told me. I'm pretty certain, without having asked (Hayes) that."

The hero in that game was none other than Hubbard himself, a native of Hubbard, Ohio, who had come to Ohio State after following the Buckeye career of Paul Warfield, who left OSU for the NFL the year before Hubbard came to Columbus.

In the '67 game, Hubbard carried the load on the offensive side of the ball with 15 carries for 103 yards, scoring two of the three Buckeye touchdowns of the game in front of a crowd of 64,144 fans at Michigan Stadium. But going into that game, it wasn't the plan that Hubbard would have



PHOTO COURTESY OF RUDY HUBBARD

STELLAR PERFORMANCE — Running back Rudy Hubbard made his last game against Michigan in 1967 a special one when he ran for 103 yards and two touchdowns to help down the Wolverines 24-14. He would become a successful head coach at Florida A&M.

the ball in his hands that often.

"I was more of a blocker. Dave Brungard was more of a runner," Hubbard said. "I was strong — much stronger than he was. We ran a lot of T-formation stuff. Typically, from the T-formation, if we were going to run to the right, I would line up on the right. If we ran to the left, I'd line up on the left and I'd be the lead blocker.

"But early in the game, Dave twisted his ankle. That had never happened before. So, with Dave twisting his ankle, we had to switch things up, and I became the runner. We ended up running a lot of traps where (Brungard) didn't have to block for that and we used the guards to open up the holes."

It was very early in the game when Hubbard became one of the lead carriers for Ohio State. Brungard ran the ball on the second play of the game for a 25-yard carry and still finished the game with 13 totes, but he was able to take those for only 39 yards total due to his ankle injury.

With his performance in the game, Hubbard was awarded the game ball by Hayes, who also said that Hubbard was playing with a "bad leg."

"I had a knee operation, and I was just gutting it out, trying to hold on to a position to play," Hubbard said. "(The operation) happened when I was a freshman. I probably hurt my knee in high school and didn't realize how bad it was. Back in those days, you'd wait out a couple of weeks and go back and play. I tore the cartilage and ligaments in my knee."

But Hubbard came through early on for the Buckeyes. In the first quarter, he had runs of 22 and 12 yards, both of which went for his two touchdowns in the game on the first two Ohio State drives of the game. He also had a run of 25 yards to begin the second drive, taking the Buckeyes from their own 36-yard line down to Michigan's 39. He got one more carry that drive, with him, Jim Otis and Brungard splitting the work on seven straight runs, and it went to the

Hubbard vs. Michigan

Year/Class	Location	Result
1965/So.	Ann Arbor	W, 9-7
1966/Jr.	Columbus	L, 17-3
1967/Sr.	Ann Arbor	W, 24-14

right for his 12-yard score.

Throughout the rest of the game, Hubbard still played a big role. He earned six of his carries late in the fourth quarter when the Buckeyes needed to run the clock out to stave off a late Wolverine comeback, and he was able to get 21 important yards.

The first of two drives, when he had four carries, helped the Buckeyes get into field-goal range for a three-pointer off the foot of Gary Cairns that put Ohio State up by two scores with just over 13 minutes to go in the game.

It wasn't the first rivalry game that Hubbard had been a part of that he was on the winning side of — the Buckeyes won in Ann Arbor, 9-7, when Hubbard was a sophomore in 1965 — but it was the first that he was on the stat sheet as prominently as he was in the '67 game.

Before the Michigan game, Hubbard had a total of 26 carries in the 1967 season, so he wasn't expecting to get the work that he did in the win. Before his senior season, he had carried the ball 18 times, and all of those carries came during his junior year.

The talented Jim Otis, who went on to play nine seasons in the NFL, was in his sophomore season and also got a lot of work running the ball in the game, but in his carries, Hubbard was more efficient that day with the ball in his hands. Otis had 26 totes for 114 yards, an average of 4.4 yards per carry compared to Hubbard's 6.9.

As any former Buckeye who played under Hayes will say, the head coach made sure Hubbard understood the importance of the rivalry when he got to Columbus.

"Woody's a big-time pusher. He couldn't stand anything about Michigan," Hubbard said. "We got indoctrinated when I first got there."

Going into the game that year, Hubbard was actually ready to leave Ohio State.

"Everybody felt like we were going to lose. The line was we were going to lose by two touchdowns," Hubbard said. "I'm thinking this is going to be my last game, and I'm glad for it. That was really my mindset at the time."

After the game, Hubbard was honored by his high school for his career at Ohio State, a banquet that Hayes showed up for. Hubbard spoke at the event and said some things about Hayes when they called him up.

"I said some things I probably shouldn't have said," Hubbard said.

So when Hayes called Hubbard to have him come to his office a few weeks later, Hubbard was sure that his former head coach was going to be upset with him for what he said at the banquet.

"I thought he was going to get back at me. You know, he had a temper," Hubbard said. "But when I got down there, he of-



MICHIGAN MEMORIES

ferred me an assistant coaching job. It just blew me away.”

Hubbard would go on to coach at Ohio State for six seasons, recruiting the likes of two-time Heisman winner Archie Griffin and the first Black quarterback to start at Ohio State, Cornelius Greene. During those years, Hubbard’s relationship with Hayes softened a bit.

“I learned a lot more about Woody as I became a coach. I realized that if you ever played for him or coached for him, he was loyal to that degree,” Hubbard said. “It wasn’t the kind of thing that you would have to call him or anything like that. If he knew that you needed help, he was just that kind of guy.”

Hubbard wasn’t sure what he was going to do in his post-college days when he first left Ohio State. He wasn’t selected in the NFL draft, but he said he was by the Montreal Alouettes of the Canadian Football League, but once he was offered a job at Ohio State, Hubbard said that his mind was made up.

His first year as a coach was the year after his big game against Michigan, helping lead the Super Sophomores to a second straight win over Michigan and a win over Southern Cal in the Rose Bowl.

“We had just a great football team. We had John Brockington and Leo Hayden. Both of those guys were first-round draft choices,” Hubbard recalled. “Then we had a guy named Jack Tatum, who was a first-round draft choice, too. He was a running back coming in. All of those guys were great running backs, and we still had Jim

Otis coming back another year.

“Then you have Rex Kern. And we were loaded on defense as well. It was probably one of Woody’s best years of coaching. During that year, we jumped out there and we looked good.”

Hubbard said that Hayes was different that year than he was in any of the other years he saw him coaching, understandably so with the talent the Buckeyes had that season.

“I mean, we were winning,” Hubbard said. “We had first-round and second-round draft choices all over the field. We had a great defense, a great offense and a heck of a kicking game as well.

“I played for Woody for four years and then coached another six. I think that year of all those years, I felt like he didn’t have a bad temper as much. He was a tough customer, but during that year, he wasn’t like that.”

Hubbard remained at Ohio State for much of the Ten-Year War between the Buckeyes and Wolverines, leaving after the 1973 season for a head-coaching position at Florida A&M, a historically Black college where he went on to have a lot of success in a 12-year stint as the head coach.

With the Rattlers, Hubbard led his team to an NCAA Division I-AA championship win in 1978, defeating the UMass Minutemen 35-28 in the title game on Dec. 16. He remains the only head coach of an HBCU to have won the Division I-AA (now FCS) championship.

The Rattlers also won two Black college football national championships under

Hubbard, sharing the title in 1977 with Grambling State and South Carolina State and earning the sole champion title the next season.

But even after spending many years away from the Buckeyes, Hubbard still follows very closely. He, like many Buckeye fans, was extremely surprised by last year’s result when unranked Michigan came to Ohio Stadium to hand Ohio State a 13-10 loss, which is head coach Ryan Day’s only loss to an unranked team in his seven-year career as head coach of the Buckeyes.

“I couldn’t believe what happened,” Hubbard said. “First of all, you couldn’t have told me that we were going to lose that game going into it. I just wouldn’t have believed it. Nobody could have convinced me of that. I felt really good about the team that we had, and I didn’t feel like Michigan had a good team.

“I knew they had really outstanding defensive tackles, but with the receivers that we had, I never thought we would be so run-heavy. I was in shock that game. That one hurt. Because of all those games, I felt like we had them right where we needed to have them. I wouldn’t have thought in a million years that we would lose that game. The few years before, Michigan kind of deserved it. They just beat us. But that game, we should have won.”

As heated as the rivalry became when Michigan players attempted to plant a block “M” flag at midfield after their shocking win, Hubbard was familiar with how something like that can go when you’re at your rival’s home.

He was in his last year coaching with Ohio State in 1973 when the Buckeyes emerged from the tunnel and tore down Michigan’s banner as a team before the 10-10 tie at the Big House when a spot in the Rose Bowl and a possible national championship was on the line for both the No. 1 Buckeyes and No. 4 Wolverines in front of a then-NCAA record crowd of 105,233 fans.

The national championship win last season eased the sting a little for Hubbard.

“I just want us to win,” he said. “I mean, I don’t want to lose to Michigan anytime, but I’m OK after having lost to Michigan, to turn around and win a national championship, all of that’s good to me.”

With his experience as a head coach, Hubbard didn’t want to criticize Day for last year’s game, because Hubbard knows how tough it can be to lead a team, but he is still ready for the Buckeyes to get back to their winning ways in the rivalry. He thinks that this is the year that will happen.

“I think we’re going to win, and we might win big,” Hubbard said. “I think their quarterback (freshman Bryce Underwood) is a good athlete, but I don’t think he’s ready. I think we have a great quarterback, and I’m really pleased with what I saw coming out of the backfield. The running backs are starting to come around.

“This year, we have a different mindset from a team point of view. I love the way that Coach Day has handled the team leading up to this game. He’s done some special things, and I think we’re in good shape right now.”

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Michigan Game Shaped Hayden's OSU Career

By **SAM CIPRIANI**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

For former Ohio State running back Leo Hayden, defeating Michigan represented the pinnacle of what it meant to be a Buckeye and an Ohioan.

Over his four years in the program, Hayden said the Michigan game shaped everything the Buckeyes did, from weekly preparation to the pride they carried, stating it was “the game that defined our season every single year.”

Hayden experienced that intensity firsthand in his four bouts with Michigan, which offered four entirely different perspectives – from heartbreak to hero – as he finished 3-1 against the Buckeyes' archrival Wolverines.

Hayden's four years in the rivalry offered him a unique lens on the highs and lows of Ohio State football, with each matchup against Michigan providing a drastically different experience.

Leophus “Leo” Hayden was born in Louisville, Ky., but moved to Dayton when he was just 9 years old. Hayden was first introduced to football for the now-closed Jackson Elementary in Dayton, prior to joining a Pop Warner team in the nearby Westwood area, where he played wide receiver and defensive end.

Hayden went on to attend Roosevelt High School, where he'd often scour the school's public library for any football books he could find, growing his love for the game. At Roosevelt, Hayden decided to transition to running back from his childhood days of playing receiver.

As the 6-0, 210-pound running back emerged as one of the nation's premier running backs at Roosevelt, Hayden came to understand that for Ohioans, beating Michigan was everything.

Over the course of his time in Dayton and during his four-year career at Ohio State, Hayden said that belief only deepened, reinforced both by the rising intensity of rivalry week and by townsfolk in Dayton who would often approach him and urge him to stay in Ohio or share their love for the Buckeyes and hatred for the Wolverines.

“When I was recruited, people would say, ‘We want to keep you in Ohio,’ “ Hayden told BSB. “Once you get here, you learn what that game means. Beating the team up North made Woody Hayes really happy, and it made all of Ohio happy.”

He drew recruiting interest from programs such as Syracuse, Notre Dame, Minnesota and Wisconsin, but ultimately chose Ohio State. Hayden said the chance to play in The Game and beat Michigan loomed

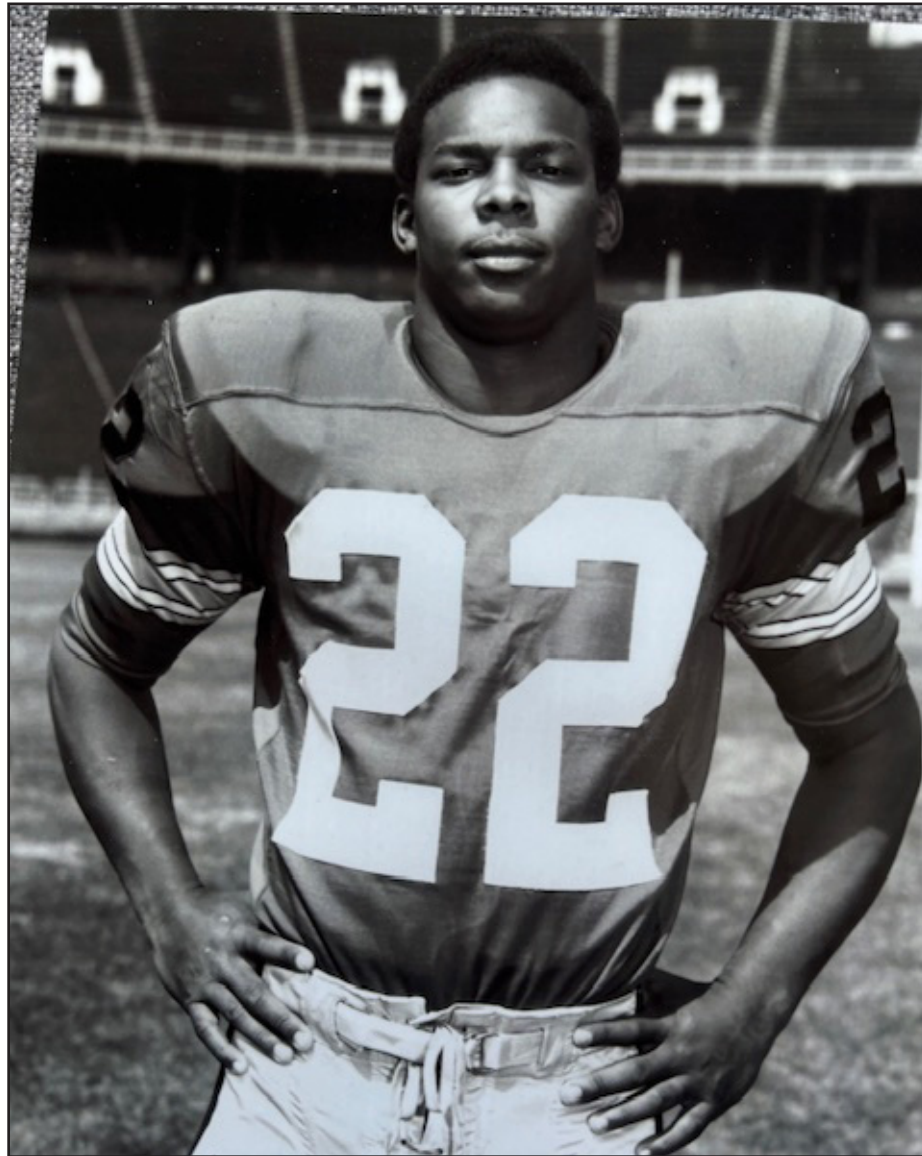


PHOTO COURTESY OF LEO HAYDEN

HERO — Leo Hayden was part of the “Super Sophs” who won the 1968 national championship, but his personal highlight was rushing for 117 yards and a touchdown in the 20-9 victory over Michigan in 1970 as a senior.

over every decision he made, as he felt an obligation to his state.

“I learned real early that beating Michigan was the way to go,” Hayden said. “I don't care who else you beat in the world. If you don't beat Michigan, you aren't playing football at the Ohio State University.”

Hayden, who was part of Ohio State teams that went a whopping 27-2 from 1968-70 when he was able to play, felt the rivalry was the primary motivator in his four seasons as a Buckeye.

Despite the success of Hayden's Ohio State teams, the running back was recruited at a turning point in history. With head coach Woody Hayes struggling over the five

years prior to Hayden's arrival – no Rose Bowl appearances in that stretch and a 4-5 record in 1966 – the freshman class of 1967, otherwise known as the “Super Sophs” as they were dubbed in 1968, proved vital in allowing Hayes to coach for another 10-plus years.

During his four years with the Buckeyes, Hayden and his fellow teammates in the class of 1967, including quarterback Rex Kern and defensive back Jack Tatum, formed a core that would define Ohio State football for years to come.

Freshman Scout Team

Hayden's first taste of the rivalry was rather uneventful. The running back just barely missed the cutoff of freshmen having the eligibility to play collegiate football, and he was relegated to the sidelines for the 1967 season.

However, that didn't mean Hayden didn't have a role in helping Ohio State throughout the season and taking down Michigan.

“At that time, freshmen could not play football anywhere in the United States of America,” Hayden said. “So our main job on the freshman team was to prepare the varsity for their games.”

Ohio State would use Hayden and his fel-

Hayden vs. Michigan

Year/Class	Location	Result
1967/Fr.	Ann Arbor	W, 24-14
1968/So.	Columbus	W, 50-14
1969/Jr.	Ann Arbor	L, 24-12
1970/Sr.	Columbus	W, 20-9

low freshmen during the season as a make-shift scout team where they would practice with the jerseys of the opposing team's top players.

Though Ohio State had struggled to start the 1967 season, beginning the season 2-3, the Buckeyes entered The Game red-hot, winning their last three prior to facing the Wolverines.

Heading into The Game, Hayden said, though he had yet to step foot on the varsity team, Hayes instilled the same intensity about beating the Wolverines to the freshmen on the roster, even more after Ohio State lost to Michigan 17-3 in Ohio Stadium in the year prior.

“Even as a freshman, I got the message that Ohio State was where I needed to go and be and beat Michigan,” Hayden said. “If you go to Ohio State, there's nothing more important than beating That Team Up North and, as Woody would call them, sons of b—s.”

And while Hayden was watching from the bench, Ohio State did just that. The Buckeyes marched into Ann Arbor on Nov. 25, 1967, and defeated the Wolverines 24-14, backed by two rushing touchdowns by senior running back Rudy Hubbard and 114 rushing yards from sophomore running back Jim Otis.

Hayden said following the victory over Michigan on the road, he was happy for his team and to get a taste of victory over the Wolverines, but he felt anxious and couldn't savor it without contributing to The Game himself.

“It was great (to win),” Hayden said. “Woody was happy, Columbus (seemed like it) was a little bit brighter, but I just wanted to play football, and I wanted to really help my team.”

Hayden wasn't the only one who knew what the freshman class could showcase in the following years. After the win, Hayes teased what would become the aforementioned “Super Sophs” and a talented running back group that included Hayden, John Brockington and Otis, who wasn't a rising sophomore but led the Buckeye in carries (141) and rushing yards (530) in 1967.

“We've got good backs now, and we have good ones coming up. The freshman team is the best ever, without question,” Hayes said.

The Super Sophs

With the switch from the freshman team to varsity as a sophomore in 1968, Hayden had his first true opportunity to get a crack at Michigan.

Hayden said even when the Buckeyes were slated to play teams before the Wolverines, Hayes and Ohio State would still game-plan for Michigan ahead of challenges in the near future.

“At that particular point in time, it was

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Woody’s belief that if you could beat the best teams in the Big Ten, then you could beat everybody,” Hayden said. “So the first thing that we started doing as a sophomore on the varsity football team was preparing for Michigan. We might have been playing SMU, who had a guy back then by the name of Jerry LeVias, who was a hell of a wide receiver, but we didn’t prepare for them. We prepared for Michigan.”

Ohio State earned a perfect 8-0 record prior to The Game with the extra preparation for Michigan paying off when the Buckeyes trounced the Wolverines 50-14. Hayden had an increased role with the Buckeyes in 1968, ranking fifth on the team with 194 yards and a score on 46 carries in just eight games.

Against the Wolverines, Hayden appeared on Ohio State’s special teams unit while earning one carry for 4 yards.

With limited opportunities throughout the season, Hayden said he relished his chance to appear on offense and was focused on making the most of every moment he was on the field, especially against Michigan.

“I was on the kickoff return team and all those (special teams units) too. So I was just anxious to do whatever it is that I could do to make a win a reality,” Hayden said. “Since it was a high-scoring game, it gave me a lot of opportunity to be on the field, even if I wasn’t behind center. But it still inspired me to be the best that I could be, especially, especially for the boys up North.”

Otis ran for 143 yards and four touchdowns on the afternoon, while Kern added 96 rushing yards and two touchdowns on the ground to lead Ohio State to its second straight victory over Michigan. Ohio State’s 1968 “Super Sophs” completed one of the most famous seasons in Buckeye history with a 27-16 victory over USC in the Rose Bowl to claim the national championship.

A Crushing Loss

According to Hayden, 1969 served as a turning point in the rivalry, where Michigan began to even the score with Ohio State, which had won nine of the last 12 matchups.

In the offseason, Michigan hired former Ohio State assistant coach (1958-62) Bo Schembechler as the program’s new leader. This began the “Ten-Year War” between Hayes and Schembechler in one of the most memorable stretches in the rivalry’s history.

Hayden said he felt that Schembechler, who is one of just three Michigan coaches to have a winning record against Ohio State (11-9-1), succeeded against the Buckeyes because, with his Ohio roots and experience coaching under Hayes, he understood the rivalry from both sides and knew precisely how to fire up the Wolverines.

“Bo Schembechler, he used to be one of Woody’s (assistant) coaches. So he came to Ohio State at its pinnacle,” Hayden said. “I think he knew what it would mean to his people (to beat Ohio State). He needed to inspire Michigan, and so he had the same sort of feelings that we had about going to Michigan and playing Michigan.”

That was exactly the case in Hayden’s junior campaign. No. 1 Ohio State rode into the Michigan game on a 22-game win streak spanning parts of three seasons, having won all of its eight matchups to that point in 1969. Michigan, on the other hand, stum-

bled twice early but had won four straight heading into the game.

Michigan reversed its fortunes in Ann Arbor, stifling the Ohio State offense on its way to a 24-12 victory as Kern and backup quarterback Ron Maciejowski threw a combined six interceptions to the Wolverine defense, leading to one of the biggest upsets in the history of the rivalry.

Hayden described the loss as surreal, noting that with Kern hindered by a back injury, Ohio State was already at a disadvantage, and it was crushing to surrender a 12-7 lead due to offensive struggles, especially from his quarterbacks.

“It was surreal, and it could be an excuse, because they say that injuries are part of the game, but we went into battle with Michigan without the benefit of quarterback Rex Kern, which was just not the way I saw things going,” Hayden said. “We tried, and we wanted to give Maciejowski everything that we had. I’m not using that excuse, because there’s always 10 other guys on the field, but being out there without the Golden Boy (Kern) was at least a 10-point deficit for us, and I think psychologically it affected us.”

Hayden, who struggled in the game with just five carries for 5 yards, described the aftermath as one of the bleakest experiences of his life, likening the atmosphere of the hostile Big House to attending a funeral after fumbling away a potential perfect season against their rival in the final game of the year.

“It was like going to the funeral,” he said. “Nobody said anything, nobody talked. You’ve got to remember that we were the ‘Super Sophs’ as we were called, coming off a national championship. It was hard because our whole history at Ohio State is defined by playing Michigan. That defines us. Hell, it didn’t define us to beat Indiana, Wisconsin or Minnesota. It defined us when we beat Michigan. That’s the Ohio State Buckeyes.”

The Star

For the third straight season, Hayden and Ohio State once again got off to a perfect 8-0 season before their matchup with Michigan to end the regular season.

Hayden had finally reached his full potential as a Buckeye as a senior in 1970, ranking second on the team to Brockington (1,041 yards, 15 touchdowns) with 719 rushing yards and three scores. Hayden’s performances earned him second-team All-Big Ten honors, while Brockington was on the first team.

Though Brockington was the starting back throughout the season, it was Hayden who shone in the seniors’ final rivalry game.

In Ohio State’s 20-9 victory over Michigan in Columbus, Hayden had the opportunity to play hero for the Buckeyes. After a field goal from Michigan evened the game just moments into the second quarter, Bruce Jankowski caught a 26-yard touchdown from Kern to give Ohio State a 10-3 lead it would never relinquish.

However, Ohio State wasn’t done. After an interception gave the Buckeyes possession on the Michigan 9-yard line midway through the final quarter, it took just three plays for Ohio State to get into the end zone. Hayden scampered for a touchdown on a pitch for his only score of the day.

As Ohio State’s defense held firm late in

the game, Hayes made an uncharacteristic move for the legendary coach on the Buckeyes’ final offensive possession – he pulled Hayden out of the lineup.

It wasn’t because Hayden missed a hole or a block; it was to honor Hayden. He allowed his running back to trot off the field at Ohio Stadium, while the home crowd roared for Hayden’s gritty performance.

Hayden finished his Senior Day against Michigan with a whopping 28 carries for 117 yards and one rushing touchdown.

Hayden said the move by Hayes was one of the most meaningful gestures he ever received from his head coach.

“The thing that was the most profound was the way Coach Hayes showed his appreciation for my output. He brought me out of the game early,” Hayden said. “He let me come off the field, and the crowd was cheering and folks were saying they hadn’t seen running like that in a long time. I feel like, truly, the coach valued me as a football player at the Ohio State University, and he valued my output against Michigan. I’ve never seen him bring anybody off the field early before, other than Jim Otis when he scored four touchdowns in 1968.”

Hayden said that Hayes honoring him by taking him out of the game early for the crowd to celebrate him was the memory he cherishes most during his time at Ohio State.

“To this day, if somebody said, ‘Well, what was your crowning achievement?’ ” Hayden said, “(it is) being able to contribute to the 1970 win over Michigan and being acknowledged by Coach Hayes, that I had

really contributed to this process and that he was proud of that. It’s so rare to ever see him bring people out of the game early so that they could be acknowledged by the crowd.”

Fire Still Lingers

Even with a 3-1 record against Michigan during his four seasons at Ohio State, the sting of his single loss and the Buckeyes’ ongoing struggles against their rival still feel like salt in the wound for Hayden.

Though the unforgettable loss in 1969 still haunts Hayden to this day, he often reminisces about the victories and the pride they brought to him and Ohio State.

“This past Penn State game, Rudy Hubbard, my backfield coach when I was a junior and senior at Ohio State that I hadn’t seen in a long time, came in for that,” Hayden said. “When we got together for this particular reunion, guess what? We talked about beating Michigan. Fifty years later, we were talking about beating Michigan.”

Despite his playing days at Ohio State being over 50 years ago, Hayden still keeps a close eye on the Buckeyes.

Hayden expressed his disappointment with Ohio State’s four-game losing streak against Michigan, adding that he thinks this Buckeye team has an opportunity to reverse the fortunes of the rivalry.

“To have Michigan beat us four times in a row is troubling,” Hayden said. “I don’t want to cast those aspersions on anybody, because that’s not Woody Hayes-like. But I would like and hope to see us beat Michigan. That’s all I can say.”

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Donley Saw Woody, Earle Fired Up Over U-M

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Doug Donley was a gifted running back at Cambridge (Ohio) High School who was converted into a wide receiver at Ohio State, talented enough to be drafted by the Dallas Cowboys in the second round (No. 53) of the 1981 NFL draft, where he played in 43 games over four seasons before retiring because of a chronic shoulder injury.

Yet he was never fully utilized with the Buckeyes because passing was an afterthought during his four seasons in Columbus. It was a transitional period for the program, with Donley coached by the legendary Woody Hayes during his freshman and sophomore seasons. The latter marked the first year for quarterback Art Schlichter as Hayes tried to introduce a passing game to complement the power football the Buckeyes were known for.

Donley talks about the days, actually weeks and months, leading to The Game every season as well as the night Hayes was fired after punching a Clemson player, which led to the hiring of Hayes' protégé Earle Bruce.

Bruce opened up the offense, but Donley felt his new coach fell into the same pattern of conservative play calling when trying to beat the Wolverines. It's a philosophy that Donley has seen repeated in recent years with the Buckeyes in the midst of a four-game losing streak to U-M.

Fortunately for Donley, the Buckeyes overcame their faults, and in Bruce's first season in 1979, OSU defeated Michigan in Ann Arbor. It would be the only win in four tries for Donley in the rivalry.

The euphoria of winning was replaced with the heartbreak of a 17-16 loss to USC in the Rose Bowl that cost the top-ranked Buckeyes a national title. Donley had four receptions for 110 yards in the game.

Donley, or "White Lightning" as he became known, had 106 catches for 2,252

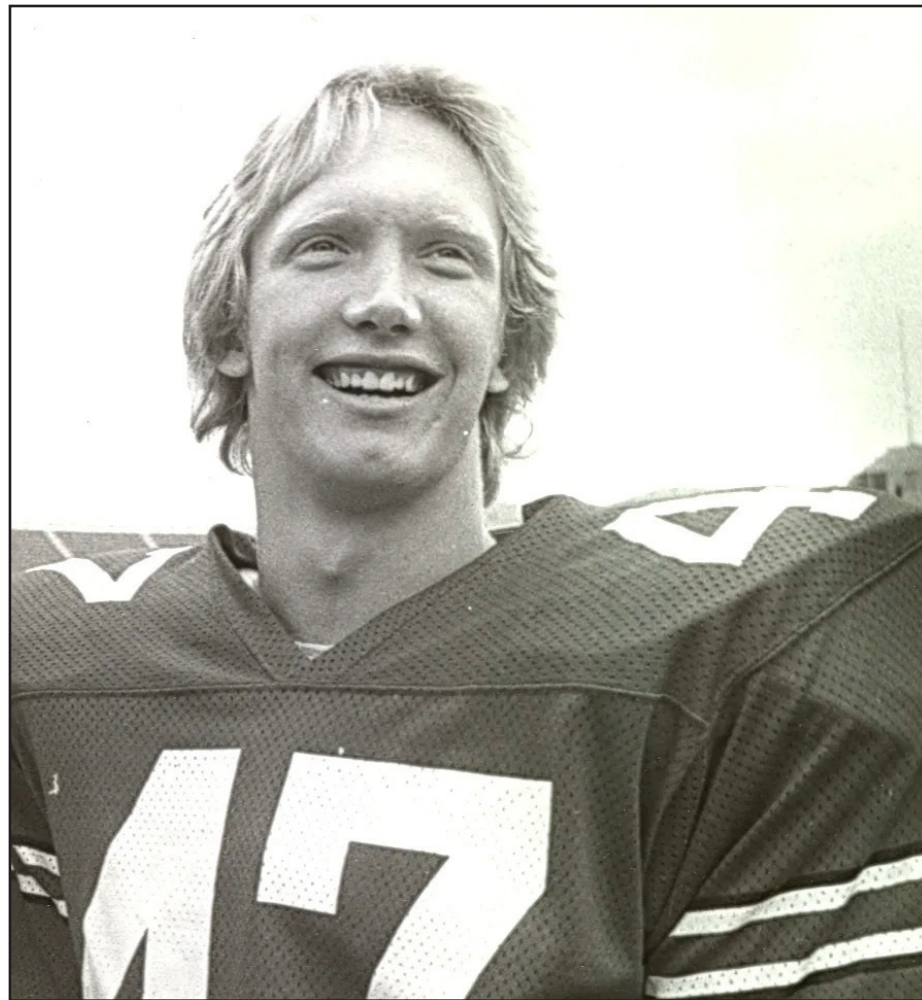


PHOTO COURTESY OF DOUG DONLEY

SO CLOSE — Ohio State went 1-3 vs. Michigan during wide receiver Doug Donley's time at Ohio State, but the victory in 1979 put the Buckeyes in the Rose Bowl with a chance to win the national title only to have a 17-16 loss to USC ruin that dream.

yards (21.2 yards per catch) and 16 touchdowns in 46 career games, including bowls, for the Buckeyes.

His career 21.2 yards per catch is still tied with Terry Glenn for No. 2 on the OSU list behind Cedric Anderson (21.3), and he was a captain and honorable-mention All-American as a senior.

In 1977, the fourth-ranked Buckeyes lost to No. 5 Michigan 14-6 in Ann Arbor, and Donley did not have a catch.

The following season, U-M won its third straight in the series, 14-3, with Schlichter completing only 4 of 9 passes for 45 yards.

In Bruce's first foray as head coach into the rivalry against Bo Schembechler, the Buckeyes prevailed 18-15 on the road to not only win for the first time against the Wolverines since 1975 but also to end a 15-quarter touchdown drought vs. them. Donley made three catches for 87 yards, including a 43-yarder.

In his senior season, he made two receptions for 34 yards when the Wolverines won 9-3.

Donley, 66, spoke to BSB from Plano, Texas, near Dallas, where he is president and CEO of Advantage Hole In One, a leader in hole-in-one insurance guarantees and other sporting promotions such as field-goal kicks and halfcourt basketball shots.

Offer He Can't Refuse

Donley said that despite the bitter rivalry, he almost ended up wearing maize and blue instead of scarlet and gray.

"I went up there and visited, and I liked Michigan," he said. "It's a lot of history up there, and then Woody put a power move on me."

Hayes and an assistant coach made a recruiting visit to Donley at his home.

"We're eating dinner at the dinner table, and it's Woody and (assistant coach) Alex Gibbs, my mom and my dad and me. And the phone rang right there in the dining room, and my mom answered it," Donley said.

"She said, 'Doug, you might want to take this to the back bedroom.' I'm like, 'I've got Woody Hayes in here. I won't take a phone call.'"

"So she goes, 'You might want to take it.' So, I went back to my parents' bedroom, and it was Bo, and he says, 'Doug, we want you. You've had a great career, blah, blah, blah.' And so I came back out, sat down at the table, and Woody said, 'Who was that?' And I said, 'Coach Schembechler.'"

"So, he immediately stood up and put his hand in my face while I'm sitting down. He said, 'I want a handshake that you're coming to Ohio State.' And I was still thinking about Notre Dame, Michigan and Ohio State."

"I was like, what am I going to do, tell Woody to go sit down, I'm not ready yet? I was just a little high school kid. So then I shook his hand, and then we never talked football the rest of the night. I couldn't say no. I was scared to death."

Donley never regretted his decision and has the utmost respect for Hayes, but it was an eye-opener his freshman season of 1977,

Donley vs. Michigan

Year/Class	Location	Result
1977/Fr.	Ann Arbor	L 14-6
1978/So.	Columbus	L, 14-3
1979/Jr.	Ann Arbor	W, 18-15
1980/Sr.	Columbus	L, 9-3

watching his coach work himself into a frenzy obsessing over Michigan.

"Woody was in that locker room up there (Ann Arbor) getting us pumped up and screaming and hollering, and he punched his fist right through the blackboard and said, 'We're going to come out fighting and we're going to beat them,' and he started banging his head into a locker."

"OK, we're going to come out fighting. So, we come out of the tunnel, and when you get down to the bottom of the tunnel, you're supposed to take a left to your bench, and once you're there, Michigan comes out of the same tunnel. When they come out, they go right and through the Go Blue section, which is the student body lined up, where people can run through that. So, we followed Woody down the tunnel, and instead of turning left, he runs into the student body and starts a fight."

"So I said, 'Is everybody going to come out fighting?' "

The incident was reminiscent of 1973, when the Ohio State players tore down the giant banner that the Michigan players went under to enter the field.

Tension City

"Obviously, it's probably one of the best rivalries in college football," Donley said. "I know it's intense now, but I don't know how it could be more intense than it was with Woody because of his hatred for Michigan. Woody, just the whole week of that Michigan week was just so tense. Everybody was on pins and needles. And Woody just wanted that game so bad that the practice was just very tense all week long."

Donley felt that tightness was detrimental.

"Yeah, I do, 100 percent," he said. "And then, we never really used the weapons that we had. Woody pounded it out. Even Ohio State now with all the weapons, Ryan Day has tried to prove that he can run the ball vs. use all the weapons that they have."

"I don't know what it is about the Michigan game that you want to prove that you can beat them by running against them and out-toughing them up front."

Michigan week was markedly different than any other time of the year.

"There was no talking," Donley said. "When you go into the training room, you couldn't talk. In meetings, one guy took his eyes off the chalkboard for a second, and Woody went crazy on him. You just can't imagine how intense it was because of Woody, I think to the detriment, because everybody was just so uptight about it. In practice, if a guy made a mistake, dropped a ball or a missed snap or anything, it just went to another level."

Feeling Blue

After the 1977 loss, the pressure

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mounted.

"The offseason was brutal because everything points to that one game. The coaches were uptight. Woody was the one that made everyone uptight," Donley said.

Donley said the one assistant who tried to temper the heat was George Chaump, who incidentally gave Donley the nickname White Lightning because of his speed.

"Chaumper was great," he said. "He wanted to keep everybody relaxed, but that wasn't going to happen. Woody wasn't going to let that happen.

"And then I think all Ohio State coaches get into that deal where they call plays not to lose, instead of to win. That's what I've seen recently is the play-calling gets so conservative. You've just got to keep it like any other game."

In 1978, Woody brought in the coveted Schlichter with the intent of upgrading the aerial attack.

"Woody just had a hard time with that," Donley said. "He did a little bit of it. Our passing attack was so archaic. We weren't going three wide and four wide and going across the grass.

"We were going on a 20-yard, 10-yard hook route. I mean, that was a big step for Woody. We had some talent, of course. Art could throw the ball. But it was just never set up for success to have a passing attack like nowadays.

"When they did call pass, again, we're not talking about a complicated route three. It was so basic that it was amazing that I got drafted in the second round because I didn't know how to run routes at all," Donley added. "I was just fast, and we just ran vertical routes. You either go deep or a post or a hook.

"That was pretty much it. When I got to Dallas, I saw these guys running routes where they're setting people up and doing this and that, and I'm going, 'Oh, OK, that's how you run routes.'"

Hayes also made the bold move of inserting Schlichter over veteran incumbent Rod Gerald.

"Art came in, and it kind of felt like they just handed him the job, which they really did. I mean, we weren't a passing team," Donley said. "We were an option team, and Rod Gerald was a great quarterback as far as the option. He could throw those short passes. He wasn't a passing quarterback.

"But there was just never that total buy-in that year when Art got the job, bringing in his (high school) coach and then getting a starting job and moving Rod out to wide receiver. Everybody didn't embrace that at all. They want to see guys earn it.

"Art was kind of aloof. He wasn't really in there in the trenches with the guys. That's another thing. When teams talk about culture, culture is where they're talking about the guys, they all fight for each other, love each other or are just connected," Donley continued.

"Art was in a tough situation because everywhere he'd been, he was pampered, too, and he was better than everybody. I think he believed some of that, that he deserved special treatment. That's just not the way you want to do it."

Donley in 1978 had 24 catches for 510 yards and three touchdowns, including the Gator Bowl. When he said Hayes didn't fully embrace the pass, he wasn't kidding. In the 14-3 loss to Michigan, Schlichter and Ger-

ald (one pass) threw a combined 10 times for 48 yards.

New Era

Ironically, it was a pass, an interception actually, that led to Hayes' demise after another defeat to Michigan in 1978. Schlichter was picked off late, sealing a 17-15 loss to Clemson in the Gator Bowl.

Charlie Bauman made the interception and went out of bounds on the OSU sideline, where Hayes punched him. Not that Donley knew that at the time.

"I was the intended receiver. I was wide open in the end zone. I watched it over and over. (ABC play-by-play announcer) Keith Jackson was like 'Some guy's wide open in the end zone.' I was wide open and waving my arms in the end zone, and I didn't know what happened.

"And then I come off the sideline and I see all this commotion and I said, 'What happened?' They said, 'Woody hit a guy.' I'm like, 'OK, so what's the big deal? I mean, Woody hits somebody every day,' and they said, 'No, he hit a guy from the other team.' Still, it wasn't like any big deal. Obviously, when you see it on TV, it's a little different story.

"When we landed on the plane, Woody got up on the intercom and said, 'I'm sorry to announce it, but I'm no longer the head coach of the Ohio State football team.'

"We just sat there. We sat on the plane for I don't know how long. No one moved. No one said a word. And it seemed like an hour, and no one moved. Then one guy got up, and then we all just filed out one by one. Nobody's talking. It was pretty crazy."

Donley said Hayes explained his actions to the team after the game.

"I have a terrible memory. I know I've had concussions and don't remember much," Donley recalled. "But I will never forget what he told us in the locker room after the game. He goes, 'Everybody up here, everybody up here.' He always whispered and always repeated himself.

"He goes, 'You probably think I'm sorry I hit that guy, don't you? Don't you?'

"I was like, 'Yeah, maybe.'

"He goes, 'You know what? Do you know what? The (expletive) bastard, he had it coming. He had it coming. And do you know why? Do you know why?'

"He goes, 'Because (Bauman's) great-great-grandfather killed my great-great-grandfather in the Civil War,' and we were like, 'What did he just say?' And for me to remember that word-for-word is amazing.

"We were just like, 'OK, what did he do?' But we loved the guy. I mean, everyone loved him because he loved us. He loved us. He cared about us on and off the field, and the guys would do anything for him, even as crazy as he was."

Enter Earle.

Bruce maybe didn't get as worked up about Michigan as Woody – who could? But he had his methods.

"He played the Michigan fight song throughout the whole locker room very loud so you couldn't even talk to your neighbor," Donley said. "And then across every doorway was a banner, so you had to duck under the banner, and he'd say, 'How long will you continue to bow to Michigan?' So, you had to go down to like four feet all week long. And then listen to the Michigan fight song

the whole week. And so, again, you've got to follow Woody.

"We did get tired of it. Now, does that make us want to fight them? We wanted to beat them. We didn't need to be bowing. There was a banner everywhere we were going: the training room, the locker room, the shower room. We had to bow down and go underneath the banner. That wasn't good."

Yet, the losing streak ended, and to do it in Michigan Stadium was special.

"I remember being up there in the end zone in the huddle and we're getting toilet paper rolls thrown at us," Donley said. "You can't even hear in the huddle it's so loud. You can't hear the quarterback saying what he's talking about. It's a crazy place. It didn't bother me. Once I got there, it's all about the games. I didn't notice anything, quite honestly. I was never intimidated by going to Michigan or anything about that or their DBs or linebackers or anybody like that. No, never, never at all."

Something Special

The advent of the 12-team College Football Playoff for the 2024 season ushered in a strange, new world as far as the rivalry is concerned.

In the past, even with the four-team playoff instituted in 2014, it would have been unlikely that the loser of The Game would still have a shot at the national championship.

Of course, that's what happened a year ago when U-M pulled off the stunning 13-10 victory at Ohio Stadium. The Buckeyes still earned a spot in the playoffs, and the rest is history. To some fans, that was enough to

nullify the shock of a fourth straight loss to Michigan.

Others believe beating Michigan is still paramount. Donley is unsure if The Game will continue to hold its place as the great rivalry that it is.

"I think it is losing its luster. I hate saying that," he said. "But once you get there, it might be a different thing. But nationally, I don't know. I would tend to think that.

"But I just can't imagine it could with it being Michigan week. That just gets me going. I think that it could potentially take a little luster off that game. I sure hope not. But, yeah, I think that's possible."

Donley was asked what he would tell the 2025 Buckeyes heading into The Game with the burden of the losing streak.

"I would say, 'Look, guys. We've got an incredible team. We're talented. We've got an incredible opportunity to go and play in this great rivalry. Go out there, have fun, be loose, and just play this game. This game is different than other games, OK? So just make sure that you play it and you have that extra intensity, but make it positive intensity.'

"Because they get so hyped up, you don't want to be going out fighting. Go 110 percent every play. I know that's a cliché, but in the Michigan game, that's what you do because you have so much adrenaline, and adrenaline can make you do things that you normally can't do. So, you've got to keep that under control. Go out, have fun, and play the game that we play, and just don't try and be somebody you're not."

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Murphy Still Frustrated By Woes Against U-M

By **SAM CIPRIANI**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

From 1977-80, Ohio State was dominant against almost every opponent in the Big Ten with a 28-4 record against in-conference foes. Yet even during an era where the Buckeyes had near-total control of the Big Ten, one opponent consistently proved to be a hurdle: Michigan.

Former Ohio State defensive back Bob Murphy recalls those years with a clear perspective, as Michigan routinely kept the Buckeyes out of the Rose Bowl during his tenure. Of the four times the Buckeyes lost to a Big Ten team during his career, three were at the hands of the Wolverines.

Murphy said each loss left an unforgettable mark, and losing so often to Michigan only made it sting more, with the pain of those losses still lingering today.

“Purdue is the only other team that beat us in the Big Ten during those four years,” Murphy said. “So it’s just something I’ll never forget.”

To add salt to the wounds caused by Michigan, Murphy – who grew up in Africa and the Philippines but attended high school in California and Hawaii – had one primary goal when choosing a college. That was to play in the Rose Bowl, one of the few games he had available on television as a child and the only one his family in California could attend.

So when Ohio State head coach Woody

Murphy vs. Michigan		
Year/Class	Location	Result
1977/Fr.	Ann Arbor	L 14-6
1978/So.	Columbus	L, 14-3
1979/Jr.	Ann Arbor	W, 18-15
1980/Sr.	Columbus	L, 9-3

Hayes visited the defensive back prior to his commitment, the Buckeyes head coach made a gesture to spark Murphy’s desire to become a Buckeye.

“He took off that ring,” Murphy said, “‘You go and visit those other schools. I want you to go ahead and go visit them.’ He took off his Rose Bowl ring, put it on that table, and he slid it over to me, and I stopped it with my hand. (Hayes) says, ‘Put that on.’ So I did, and he says, ‘You go visit those other schools. So I can promise you this, you will never own one of those rings.’”

“I tell you what, as an 18-year-old, I looked down at that ring with a gold rose and a diamond coming up out of a scarlet stone. I’m telling you, it was powerful. I’m not going to say that (it ensured my commitment), but it sure helped. I then took my visits and ended up committing to Ohio State.”

However, things didn’t go as planned for Hayes and Murphy. Michigan defeated Ohio State during the final two years of the legendary coach’s tenure and delayed the

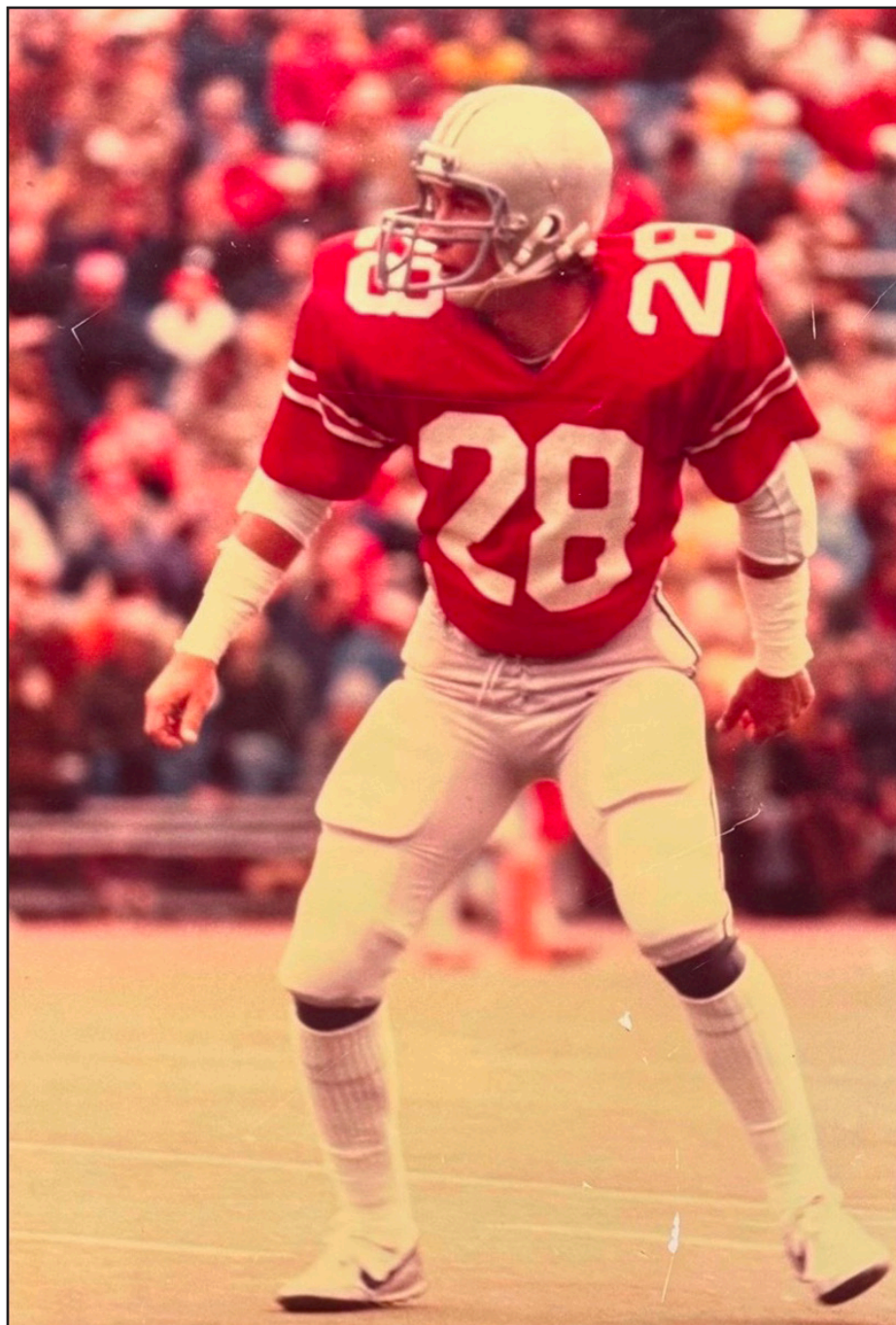


PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB MURPHY

HAUNTING — Losing three out of four years to Michigan still burns former defensive back Bob Murphy decades later. He played his first two seasons for Woody Hayes before Earle Bruce took over and led the Buckeyes to a victory over Michigan in 1979.

fulfillment of the defensive back’s dreams of returning to California to play in front of his family in the Rose Bowl. The rivals then split the first two games under Buckeye head coach Earle Bruce in 1979 and 1980 after he was hired to replace the fired Hayes during the 1978-79 offseason.

Those repeated losses left a lasting impression on Murphy, framing his memories of facing Michigan during his first two years under Hayes.

Struggles During Hayes’ Final Years

Though Murphy was on the roster as a freshman in 1977, he had not yet earned the privilege to travel with Ohio State.

Following a 9-1 start to the season, Ohio State collapsed in its final regular-season game at Michigan, falling 14-6 to the Wolverines, with a lost fumble from quarterback Rod Gerald in the fourth quarter on a first-and-goal from the 8-yard line

killing a chance at a comeback.

With the defensive back left off the travel squad, Murphy recalled a feeling of helplessness while watching from his dormitory as the Buckeyes lost The Game.

“I had to watch the game from my dorm room,” Murphy said. “They played in Ann Arbor my freshman year in ’77. Rod Gerald was our quarterback, and we lost 14-6, but we missed three field goals. Nine plus six is 15. That’s the game. Gerald got hit when he was trying to pitch to running back Ron Springs. We were driving down on their end of the field, and we fumbled the ball, and they got it, so a touchdown as well would have put us up or tied us. That’s one of those games watching that game from television in my dorm was not pleasing.”

Following the game, Murphy said he felt embarrassed that he was unable to contribute, citing it as what fueled him to

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get on the field in 1978.

"If you're an athlete at the college level, everybody has a little bit of an ego, and you've worked hard to get there, and when you get there, you're almost irrelevant. I'm talking about my freshman year, and it just made me question things. I was already homesick, and then not getting to travel, and staying behind. I wouldn't even leave my dorm room during that time, because I didn't want to go down to the cafeteria, where people that knew me would say, 'Hey, aren't you supposed to be in Ann Arbor?' Yeah, I'm not going to listen to that."

In Murphy's sophomore campaign, the defensive back finally had the opportunity to take a crack at Michigan. After recording his first career interception against Illinois on Nov. 11, Murphy was thrust into the starting lineup for the remainder of the season.

Coming off a 7-2-1 start to the 1978 season, Ohio State welcomed 9-1 Michigan to Ohio Stadium, and for the first time, Murphy wasn't standing on the sideline. He was in the game, going up against the Wolverines himself.

Recording four tackles on the afternoon, Murphy was rather quiet, and so was Ohio State's offense. The Buckeyes fell 14-3, after Ohio State failed to score a touchdown for the second straight game against the Wolverines.

Murphy said the second straight loss sent him into tough self-reflection. He questioned what more he could have done.

"Losing meant we missed the Rose Bowl my sophomore year, and I wasn't going to get to go home," Murphy said. "So I wasn't going to get to go home in front of my own peers and relatives, and our family. My mom's side and my dad's side are all from California, and so that's going home for me. It was a downer, a total bummer, because you start reliving it in your head, 'What could I have done? What could we have done better?'"

However, with Hayes' third straight loss to Michigan and a disastrous altercation involving Hayes in the Buckeyes' bowl game against Clemson, major changes would come to the Ohio State program in the middle of Murphy's Buckeye career.

Bruce Brings New Energy

Late in Ohio State's 17-15 loss to Clemson on Dec. 29, 1978, Hayes punched a Tiger player and was fired the following day, paving the way for the Buckeyes to hire Bruce in January of 1979.

Ohio State entered The Game in Ann Arbor hot off 10 straight wins to start, while Murphy became a full-time starter, racked up 15 tackles and two interceptions on the year.

However, with a 15-12 deficit heading into the final period, it looked as if Ohio State might lose its fourth straight game to Michigan.

"This is Earle's first year. We're undefeated, and we went into Ann Arbor with incredible confidence," Murphy said. "Then you look up at that scoreboard in the beginning of the fourth quarter and you're behind, and we just weren't playing the way we should have been playing."

After running back Jimmy Gayle fumbled on the Michigan 10-yard line, Ohio State needed a late blocked punt from Buckeye linebacker Jim Laughlin that was

recovered by safety Todd Bell and taken back for a touchdown to give Ohio State an 18-15 victory.

For Murphy, watching the punt get blocked and being out there for the final moments added up to one of the best days of his life.

"The adulation and the euphoria of that blocked punt, then Todd Bell scooped it up scores, and we're going to the Rose Bowl. That was just, just one of the top five or six happiest things that's ever happened in my life," Murphy said. "That's one of them. Just the fact that, you know what, we're undefeated, No. 1 in the country. We're going to go to the Rose Bowl and play for the national title. That feeling was just like you're walking on air. You feel like you've made it, and it's a great feeling."

Murphy's dream of playing in the Rose Bowl came true, but the game ended in a 17-16 loss to Southern California.

Disappointing Finish

Murphy wouldn't be so lucky in his final season with Ohio State in 1980. Despite entering The Game 9-1, while Michigan entered 8-2, Ohio State was unable to get in the end zone for the third time in Murphy's four seasons as a Buckeye.

The senior defensive back finished his outing with four tackles and one of three Ohio State interceptions. However, it took just one Michigan touchdown to oust the Buckeyes in Ann Arbor. After the game was deadlocked at three heading into the break, Michigan wide receiver Anthony Carter caught a 13-yard touchdown in the third quarter to give the Wolverines a 9-3 victory over Ohio State.

Murphy recalled Carter's touchdown, stating he knew Ohio State's coverage was busted on Michigan's game-winning score, adding that he spoke with former defensive coordinator Dennis Fryzel and defensive backs coach Nick Saban regarding the breakdown.

"I felt they just made a call that if I let Anthony (Carter) run free across the middle, (linebacker) Marcus Marek is not going to be able to get back there in time, and I won't be able to get up there in time," Murphy said. "So what goes through my mind? 'Do I call a timeout?' Because I knew it was not the right call. So it was just a communication error."

"I talked to Denny and Nick about it. They said, 'Why didn't you just call a timeout?' They were really nice about it. I said, 'What, and question you two?' We're against Michigan and about to score, and I'm going to question the defensive call, when nobody questioned a defensive call ever? You just didn't do that back in those days. They said, 'Man, we wish you would have (called a timeout).' So they didn't blame me for it, they just wished I would have called a timeout because it was the wrong call."

With yet another trip to the Rose Bowl on the line, Murphy called the loss in his senior season one of the most heartbreaking of his Buckeye career.

"That loss is right there, next to the Rose Bowl loss for the national title. The pain is equal, maybe a little bit greater," Murphy said. "Because of the work that we put into it, because it was my senior year, I would've loved to go back to California and finish in the Rose Bowl as a senior."

Wounds Still Feel Fresh

Murphy's 1-3 record against Michigan is a chapter he can't close, even decades later.

Each of the three losses left a different mark on Murphy. Even in 1977, when he didn't suit up, the fire still burned for the former defensive back.

"That doesn't settle well with anybody (in the freshman class of 1977), especially when we know that we probably should have won all four of them, at least three out of the four," Murphy said. "I want to beat (Michigan) as badly today as at any time in my life, and I don't even live in Ohio anymore."

Despite those three losses, the pride of that lone win over Michigan outweighs the sting of the defeats. Murphy said the rivalry taught him lessons that have stayed with him, and over time, he's come to see that its impact ran deeper than wins and losses.

"You're always going to have challenges in life, and our challenge was Michigan

back in those days," Murphy said. "There's always going to be a formidable opponent in front of you. It doesn't matter what it is. Are you going to implement those things that you learned at Ohio State from being a Buckeye? For me, that's what I've done, that's what I try to do continuously."

Yet even in frustration with a losing record against Michigan, Murphy said he has a deep sense of respect for the rivalry, shaped by knowing how hard it is to win The Game and how defining it becomes for every Buckeye.

"Historically, when you go back through the history of all the Ohio State players, the jersey they're wearing has been woven with all of (the players before them), and all of us are woven into the jersey that the guys are wearing today," Murphy said. "So it means something, Beating Michigan means something, and it will mean something forever. I'll tell you what, and it's true. I only have one pair of gold pants, but I wish I had four pairs of them."

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Roberts Goes 2-2 Against Wolverines In '80s

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Playing for Ohio State from 1980-83, Ohio State All-America offensive lineman Bill Roberts just missed the legendary “Ten-Year War” phase of the rivalry, but that doesn’t mean the rivalry wasn’t spirited when he played for the Buckeyes.

Roberts’ experiences against Michigan were marked by cold showers, a failed trick play, two pairs of gold pants and an intensity that still sticks with him today when he watches The Game.

“It’s a rivalry that’s intense,” Roberts said. “You watch and you feel the intensity. You always hope nothing happens, like interceptions or fumbles. Things happen in games, but not that game. You really don’t want anything good to happen to The Team Up North in that game.”

Roberts, who grew up in south Florida, said the rivalry didn’t necessarily pique his interest before he arrived in Columbus. The Rose Bowl game was a different story, though. A standout offensive tackle at Carol City High School, Roberts said he remembers watching Ohio State playing in the Rose Bowl in the 1970s, and the Buckeyes’ presence in “The Granddaddy of Them All” was in part enough to lure him away from his home state.

“The fact that they were in the Rose Bowl, it was the biggest school in the country, the most prestigious school, and the fact that they were playing on TV so that my parents could see me play,” said Roberts when asked what led him to ultimately commit to Ohio State.

Despite coming all the way up from Florida, it didn’t take long for Roberts to find out exactly how much The Game means to Ohio State.

“As I came up to Ohio State, it was easy to adapt to the rivalry, because that was all everybody talked about,” Roberts said. “You always would hear about it, you would always see it, and somebody always said something about, ‘You guys have to beat them,’ so we always knew that’s what we wanted to do.”

1980: Loss To U-M Costs OSU Rose Bowl

Roberts came into a pretty good situation as a freshman at Ohio State. Despite having to replace Woody Hayes, arguably the best coach in program history, after the 1978 season, then-head coach Earle Bruce had Ohio State in a good position. In 1979, the Buckeyes had won all of their regular-season games and narrowly missed out on national championship honors when they lost in the Rose Bowl to USC 17-16.

Bruce had another talented team on his hands in 1980, and after moving Luther Henson from the defense to offensive tackle, he had a veteran offensive line ready to block for uber-talented quarterback Art Schlichter. Roberts accepted his role as a reserve player as a freshman, even if he was more talented than some of the older players in the room.

“I remember coming in, I had upperclassmen ahead of me, I realized I had to wait my turn,” Roberts said. “However, I

Roberts vs. Michigan		
Year/Class	Location	Result
1980/Fr.	Columbus	L, 9-3
1981/So.	Ann Arbor	W, 14-9
1982/Jr.	Columbus	W, 24-14
1983/Sr.	Ann Arbor	L, 24-21

did letter, and I played in every game.”

Bruce’s offensive line configuration apparently worked given that Ohio State won nine of its first 10 games that season, with the only loss in that span being a 17-0 defeat to UCLA in the fourth game of the season. Having won their first seven Big Ten games, the Buckeyes had a Big Ten championship berth and a spot in the Rose Bowl on the line when they faced Michigan that year.

The massive stakes of the 1980 game between Ohio State and Michigan made for quite the introduction to the rivalry for Roberts.

“I remember it was a high-intensity game,” Roberts said. “Every year, the emphasis was to focus on that game. That was a big game.”

Unfortunately for Roberts and the Buckeyes, the game didn’t go as planned. Ohio State’s offense failed to show up in a 9-3 loss to Michigan, its third straight to the Wolverines in Columbus. The Buckeyes totaled just 244 yards in the loss, and their lone score came on a 33-yard field goal by Vlade Janakievski in the second quarter.

The Buckeyes had to settle for a berth in the Fiesta Bowl, while the Wolverines headed to the Rose Bowl. Ohio State was unable to respond after its loss to Michigan in the postseason, and Bruce’s team was defeated by Penn State 31-19 in the Fiesta Bowl.

1981: Buckeyes Upset Wolverines

Ohio State couldn’t bypass Roberts’ athleticism during the 1981 season. Roberts was made a full-time starter as a sophomore and was a leader inside the locker room.

“I realized that I had a lot of potential, and a lot of guys would follow me,” Roberts said of his sophomore season. “I was a natural leader. I wasn’t a captain because you had to be a senior to be a captain. I eventually became captain, but my class had a lot of talented guys come in from all parts of the country, and so we all contributed early.”

Ohio State had some growing pains early. The Buckeyes challenged themselves in the nonconference with games against Duke, Stanford and Florida State, and they went 3-1 through that stretch with a win over Michigan State sandwiched between the Blue Devils and Cardinal. After suffering a loss to Wisconsin in its second Big Ten game, Ohio State was just 3-2 through its first five games.

The Buckeyes lost once more before their regular-season finale to enter The Game at 7-3. Having lost four of its last five against Michigan and coming into Ann Arbor unranked, Ohio State was by



PHOTO COURTESY OF BILL ROBERTS

BLOCK O — Offensive lineman Bill Roberts won the Super Bowl twice with the New York Giants, but nothing compares to being in the trenches for four games against rival Michigan and helping the Buckeyes to victory.

no means the favorite heading into The Game.

However, behind a dominant defensive attack and two touchdowns from Schlichter, Ohio State clinched a share of the Big Ten title with Iowa with a 14-9 win over the Wolverines.

Roberts said Michigan’s hostile environment carried over into the locker room, where Ohio State couldn’t get a single warm shower.

“What I remember most of all was the freaking cold showers they turned on us,” Roberts said. “The showers were cold. (There wasn’t) a warm shower in the place, so they were already salty that we had taken care of their butts, but I remember that game. They had some good guys over there. We had some good guys. We really focused in their place to win that game and come out victorious.”

Ohio State’s win may have been a relative surprise to those outside the program, but Roberts said the Buckeyes weren’t surprised by their upset win over the Wolverines.

“We weren’t shocked because the goal every year was to beat those guys,” Roberts said. “That was a goal coming in. We were going to go through the season. We were going to play every game, but the

end result was to win the Big Ten. And if it came down to us and them, we always wanted it to be us.”

Ohio State and the Hawkeyes each finished the regular season with a 6-2 conference record. However, because Iowa hadn’t been to the Rose Bowl in over 20 years and Ohio State had gone to Pasadena just two years earlier, it was the Hawkeyes who were sent to the Rose Bowl.

Roberts still wishes the Buckeyes had been sent to Pasadena instead of the Hawkeyes.

“The time we were supposed to go to the Rose Bowl, we were tied with Iowa,” Roberts said. “They had to go because they hadn’t gone in 20-plus years. In my four years, I never went to the Rose Bowl, which is a disservice to me. I went to Ohio State because I saw all of the Rose Bowl pictures of Art Schlichter, the parade and everything. They went the year before I got there, and they went the year after I left. In between that, where we were tied with Iowa, that was our turn, and we couldn’t go.”

Instead, Ohio State was sent to Memphis to play in the Liberty Bowl. The Buckeyes defeated Navy 31-28 to finish the season at 9-3.

MICHIGAN MEMORIES

1982: Win Over U-M Helps OSU Go 9-3

Ohio State's 1982 season went similarly to the previous year. After facing some adversity to start the season with a 2-3 record, Ohio State won five straight games heading into The Game.

However, the Wolverines won their first eight conference games of the season. The Buckeyes, meanwhile, suffered only one conference loss, a 6-0 defeat to Wisconsin on Oct. 9, but because they played one fewer conference game than Michigan that season, the Big Ten championship wasn't on the line for The Game.

Although Ohio State hadn't necessarily played up to its potential in the 1982 season, Roberts was having a strong season along the offensive line. For the first time in his collegiate career, Roberts was named to the All-Big Ten second team.

The Game that year set up well for an offensive lineman as talented as Roberts. With bad, rainy weather creating sloppy conditions, Ohio State ran the ball 51 times and threw the ball 18 times. The Buckeyes totaled 211 yards on the ground, which, along with six turnovers forced by the defense, was good enough to fuel the team to a 24-14 win over the Wolverines.

"It was slushy and cold, it was a dreary day, and we had some turnovers, we had some miscues, we had some busted plays, and we always just kept going. We kept going because our defense was playing ball and their offense was playing ball, and we just stayed the task."

It was Ohio State's first home win over Michigan in eight years, which Roberts wasn't aware of when BSB sat down to interview him.

"I didn't realize that," Roberts said when asked about Ohio State snapping its home losing streak to Michigan. "It probably came up, and that might have turned the heat up on us. I can remember they shut down High Street. They had to board up everything. It's always that intense. When you start a season, it's always that last week, 'What's going to happen that's going to make or break your season?' You don't want to do anything wrong to hurt your team. You don't want to do anything outside the ordinary, because all of your focus is on beating that Team Up North."

For the third straight season, Ohio State finished the season at 9-3 after defeating BYU 47-17 in the Holiday Bowl.

1983: Trick Play Doooms Bucks

Unlike the previous year, Ohio State fared very well in nonconference play to start the season. The Buckeyes took down both Oregon and Oklahoma to start the season at 2-0.

However, Big Ten losses to Iowa and Illinois meant that the Buckeyes' chances of making the Rose Bowl were once again eliminated by the time of The Game.

Having won four straight games heading into its regular-season finale, Ohio State still had the chance to win nine regular-season games for the first time since Roberts' freshman season.

Although sophomore running back Keith Byars ran for 115 yards and two touchdowns on 26 carries, the Buckeyes fell to their archrivals 24-21.

"They play too, so they played tough. They had good teams," Roberts said. "It was like a wind-out-of-your-sails moment because we still didn't get a chance to go to the Rose Bowl. We still didn't win the Big Ten. They got us that year."

The most memorable play of that game came in the fourth quarter, when Ohio State was trailing 17-14 and had the ball at the Michigan 38-yard line. The usually conservative Bruce uncharacteristically called a fumblerooskie trick play.

The fumblerooskie, which is when a center intentionally places the ball behind him for another offensive player to pick it up, didn't work. The play was designed to go to guard Jim Lachey, but he never got his hands on the ball, and Michigan recovered. The Wolverines scored a touchdown after the Buckeyes' miscue at 6:57 to take a 24-14 lead they wouldn't relinquish.

"Of all plays we could have called, we wanted to do Jim Lachey running around with the fumblerooskie, because I guess he was fast and ran track at (St. Henry High School)," Roberts said. "The call and the timing of it, we would have been better off just going right off tackle. We would have been better off going straight ahead."

"We were like dumbfounded because that play didn't really work well in practice. The locker room was kind of in disarray because everybody was like, 'Why the

hell did we do that? Why?' I guess Earle Bruce felt good because he wanted to do something different for Ohio State, and to show up The Team Up North, but in hindsight, we could have just run straight off tackle."

Neither team went to the Rose Bowl because of Illinois' undefeated record in conference play, but Michigan was sent to the Sugar Bowl, while the Buckeyes had a date with Pittsburgh in the Fiesta Bowl. The Buckeyes defeated the Panthers 28-23 to go 9-3 for the fourth straight season.

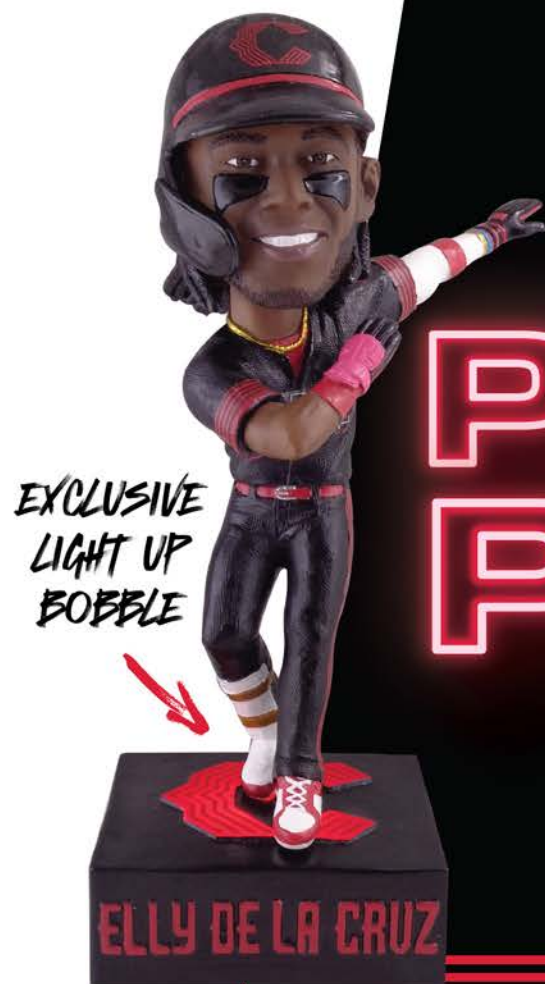
After his fourth year with the Buckeyes, Roberts was selected in the first round of the 1984 NFL draft by the New York Giants. He had a very successful tenure with the Giants, winning two Super Bowls with the team and earning a Pro Bowl nod with the team in 1990.

Roberts played 13 total years in the NFL and had brief stints with the New England Patriots and New York Jets. He started in 154 games during his career and played in 41 more.

To this day, Roberts leaves time for his Buckeyes, especially when they're playing Michigan.

Now, Roberts simply hopes Ohio State will snap its losing streak to the Wolverines.

"The last four years, they've been taking it to us, and it's awful," Roberts said. "I can't even brag, I can't talk, but I still watch with intensity, and hopefully this year it won't be the same. I know we've got some injuries. Guys might not play, so we've got to do what we've got to do."



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Huffman Goes 1-4 Vs. U-M For Home State Team

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Any Buckeye who doesn't go undefeated against the Wolverines during his time in Columbus isn't completely satisfied with his final record in The Game. But few former Ohio State players look back at their time in the rivalry with more heartache than former Buckeye tight end and Ohio native Rich Huffman. Huffman, who was at Ohio State from 1986-90 and went 1-4 against Michigan, still wishes his teams had fared better against their archrival.

"I have my own regrets with the losses that we had when I was there, and I'm thankful I got one pair of gold pants, but you look back and say, 'I should have had at least four, and that hurts that I don't have that,' " Huffman said. "Yeah, that hurts. I mean, I see these other guys wearing them down there when we get to go down on the field, and that will always be something that will bother me. But that's just how we take it. That's how strongly we believe in the rivalry."

As someone who grew up in Salem, Ohio, near Youngstown, Huffman learned to believe in the rivalry from a young age. Huffman, a Buckeye fan as a child, can remember pulling for Art Schlichter and Vaughn Broadnax whenever they competed against the Wolverines.

"I remember, Sports Illustrated had (Schlichter) on the cover, and they're going to the Rose Bowl. I had cut that out, and I had it in my desk at school where you open it up. I had it taped on the inside. It was a special time.

"The game actually always fell around my birthday, and the Buckeyes were always successful in the mid-'70s and late-'70s when I was growing up. I was in the back yard acting like I was Vaughn Broadnax blocking three guys down to help Schlichter get into the end zone for the Buckeyes to beat Michigan. I just have a ton of good memories, and I relive them every year."

Huffman's time pretending to block like Broadnax was well spent, because he was recruited by several colleges, including not just Ohio State, but also Michigan. Still, the Wolverines couldn't pry Huffman away from Ohio as they had done with others.

"Kirk Lowdermilk was from Salem, and he was there a couple of years before me, but I always kind of idolized him, and what he did," Huffman said. "I was recruited by Michigan. The schools pretty much recruited both sides. But you always knew where you stood, and I always knew I stood as a Buckeye."

1986: Loss To U-M Ends Rose Bowl Hopes

Huffman would have to wait to make his Buckeye debut because he redshirted as a true freshman. Huffman watched from the sidelines as then-head coach Earle Bruce had one of his best teams as the leader of the program.

After suffering two straight nonconference losses to open the season, Bruce's Buckeyes rattled off nine straight wins and put the Big Ten title on the line in The

Huffman vs. Michigan

Year/Class	Location	Result
1986/RS	Columbus	L, 26-24
1987/Fr.	Ann Arbor	W, 23-20
1988/So.	Columbus	L, 34-31
1989/Jr.	Ann Arbor	L, 28-18
1990/Sr.	Columbus	L, 16-13

Game.

The 9-2 Buckeyes had a chance to play in Pasadena for the first time since 1984 when they took on No. 6 Michigan. Huffman couldn't make an impact on the field but remembers doing what he needed to do in practice to get the Buckeyes ready to play in the regular-season finale, which included donning maize and blue on the scout team.

Just in case the stakes weren't high enough for the 1986 game, then-Michigan quarterback Jim Harbaugh guaranteed the Wolverines would win.

"I remember being on the scout team and having to make our helmets with the blue and the maize and putting on their jerseys, and I remember just how big it was when Harbaugh guaranteed the victory. We had all that stuff hung up around the locker room," Huffman said. "They put mats out that said, 'Beat Michigan,' and we walked on them all day, and the fight song was playing in the locker room all week."

Unfortunately for Ohio State and Huffman, Harbaugh made good on his guarantee. The Wolverines took down Ohio State 26-24 in Columbus, after Buckeye kicker Matt Frantz missed a potential go-ahead 45-yard field goal in the closing minutes of the game.

"I just remember us getting out in front early (14-6)," Huffman said. "I know Michigan kind of came back. I thought for sure we were going to score there at the end, and then Matt Frantz just shanked that left on the field goal. It was just heart-breaking. We were still co-champs of the Big Ten. We had a great Cotton Bowl, and all of that. A piece of that kind of broke your heart."

As Huffman pointed out, Michigan's win meant it got to go to the Rose Bowl, while Ohio State had to settle for a Big Ten co-championship and a berth in the Cotton Bowl. The Buckeyes won that Cotton Bowl over Texas A&M, while the Wolverines ironically lost to a John Cooper-led Arizona State team in the Rose Bowl.

1987: Bruce Sent Off With Win Over U-M

The 1987 season was mainly one to forget for Ohio State. Huffman suffered a broken leg in the spring and didn't play as a redshirt freshman. As a whole, it was a very disappointing season for the Buckeyes. Bruce's group went just 5-4-1 in their first 10 games, with the worst loss being a 31-10 defeat against Indiana on Oct. 10.

Bruce was fired in the days leading up to the Michigan game, which, according to Huffman, was a disappointment for those in the locker room.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICH HUFFMAN

NO LOVE FOR BLUE — Losing four of five to your rival when you felt you should have won them all leaves former Ohio State tight end Rich Huffman sour, but he feels this season's Buckeyes are primed for victory.

"Everybody, I mean everybody, loved Earle," Huffman said. "You knew where you stood with him. He was a fighter. It was rough. Nobody wanted him fired. We came to Ohio State to play for him, so it stung, but I think it definitely propelled us to send him out the right way."

The support the Buckeyes had for their coach was apparent before the game, as players donned Bruce headbands in war-mups.

The Buckeyes didn't necessarily look fiery to start the game. Bruce's group gave up over 283 yards in the first half on the way to trailing 13-7 at the break. However, behind a 70-yard touchdown reception by running back Carlos Snow, the Buckeyes surged in front 20-13. Then, after Michigan tied the game with a third-quarter touchdown, it was Frantz who redeemed himself to give Bruce one final win with a game-winning 26-yard field goal.

"To be able to celebrate up there in their locker room, and with (Bruce)," Huffman said, "it was just one of the best feelings I've ever felt. The camaraderie and the brotherhood, it was just a sweet victory."

1988: OSU Comeback Falls Short

With Bruce gone, the Buckeyes turned to Cooper, the former coach of the Sun

Devils, to take over, and the transition was far from seamless.

Although Huffman was back in the rotation at tight end after recovering from his injury, Ohio State was even worse than it had been the year before. The Buckeyes dropped their first three Big Ten games to fall to 2-4. Cooper partially stabilized the season, leading his team to a 2-1-1 stretch headed into the Michigan game, but the Buckeyes were still underdogs against the eventual Rose Bowl champions.

"The first year (under Cooper) we were given no chance," Huffman said. "We had a rough up-and-down season. Michigan had already won the Big Ten. They were going to the Rose Bowl. They came out, they got up on us early, but we rallied to come back, and we should have won that game."

The Buckeyes got out to a poor start in their 34-31 loss to Michigan in 1988. Ohio State trailed 20-0 at halftime but stormed back in the third and fourth quarters behind strong rushing performances from fullback Bill Matlock and Snow, who ran for 170 yards. Matlock and Snow, who combined for over 220 rushing yards for the game, had back-to-back rushing touchdowns that helped the Buckeyes take a 24-20 lead in the fourth quarter after a field goal by Pat O'Morrow.

The Wolverines responded with their

own touchdown, but Matlock put the Buckeyes up 31-27 with just over two minutes to go in the game from 16 yards out.

It appeared that a stunning upset was in store for the 1988 rendition of The Game, but that was before Michigan receiver John Kolesar, an Ohio native, had his say. On the ensuing kickoff after Matlock's touchdown, Kolesar found a hole in Ohio State's kick coverage to go for 59 yards on his return. Huffman remembers the play well because he was on the kick-coverage unit.

"I was on that kickoff coverage that John Kolesar ran back. Thank God I was on the other side," Huffman said with a laugh. "He didn't run it down my side."

Things only got worse for the Buckeyes shortly thereafter, as Kolesar hauled in a 41-yard touchdown that won the game for the Wolverines. It was the second time Kolesar played the villain against Ohio State. In the 1985 game, Kolesar hauled in a game-sealing 77-yard touchdown that helped Michigan beat Ohio State 27-17.

"He was a good athlete, but he was a grinder, and he just seemed to have his day against us a couple times," Huffman said of Kolesar. "A lot of those guys, that's how they want to make their mark – come back to Ohio, where they live, and run their mouth."

1989: OSU Falls Short In Bo's Last Game

Ohio State was much better in its second season under John Cooper. Despite being bludgeoned in a 42-3 loss to USC to start the season, Ohio State bounced back with a six-game winning streak to head into The Game with an 8-2 record.

Huffman also had his first career catch that year, a 28-yarder during Ohio State's 42-22 win over Wisconsin. Huffman was still a backup at Ohio State's tight end position that year, but he said he was thrown the ball more.

"We didn't really pass the ball a whole lot," Huffman said. "(Former Ohio State tight end) Jeff Ellis caught a lot of balls, but I was mostly the second tight end to

come in. We blocked all the time."

Despite going on a winning streak during the 1989 season, the Buckeyes could only hope to be co-Big Ten champs with a win over Michigan, because of a loss they had suffered to Illinois in their fourth game of the season.

Still, there was plenty to play for. Michigan coach Bo Schembechler was set to retire after the season and was therefore coaching against the Buckeyes for the final time.

Just as the Buckeyes had done a few years prior, Michigan sent its coach off with a win over its rival.

Huffman said he felt like the Wolverines played with some extra motivation in their 28-18 win over Ohio State that year.

"They did in the second half," said Huffman when asked if Michigan played with extra intensity that year. "We couldn't stop them. We couldn't stop Leroy Hoard (152 yards rushing), and when you get an incentive like that – I mean, that's always something that the other team can jump up on and can help propel them to more intensity. Or just laying it on the line, maybe a little harder."

1990: OSU Loses Third Straight To U-M

In its third year under Cooper, it seemed like Ohio State had the type of team needed to finally get over the hump against Michigan. The Buckeyes again suffered early losses to USC and Illinois but were riding a five-game winning streak headed into their final regular-season game.

With a Big Ten championship and a spot in the Rose Bowl on the line, Ohio State's offense failed to show up in a 16-13 loss to Michigan. The Buckeyes totaled just 284 yards in the loss, with then-starting quarterback Greg Frey throwing three costly interceptions. The Buckeyes held a 13-6 lead early in the second half but were held scoreless over the final 25-plus minutes of the game.

"I remember we were the better team," Huffman said of the loss. "It just didn't go our way. I still carry it to this day. We gave

them that one also. I still have a bad taste in my mouth about that. There were just a lot of things from the play calling and the opportunities we missed. Not to place blame, I don't know what happened that day, but it wasn't our best."

Although Huffman was at Ohio State only for the beginning of Cooper's issues against Michigan, he felt like the teams he was a part of had a tendency to play a bit tighter when things started to go wrong in The Game.

"If the ball doesn't bounce your way, or things just start going south, you're a little more tense, maybe a little more tight, and you're not out there giving it your best, and you're making mental mistakes, or just trying to play out of your zone, and it's just not working."

Individually, Huffman still made his mark on the Buckeye program with his first collegiate touchdown, a 2-yard receiving score in his team's 42-2 win over Purdue. Huffman is still proud of the fact that he overcame adversity to help the Buckeyes in any way.

"They said I wouldn't play again. After I broke my leg, they were skeptical that I'd be able to come back, but I did," Huffman said. "I battled through a lot of injuries. I had broken my hand in 1990 against USC, and they taped it up every week. I put a light cast on it and cut the cast off at the end of the week, so that I could play in the game at the end of the week. That's what it meant for me to get out there and participate and just be a good teammate. I re-

member the touchdown. I can remember exactly how it went down. It was at Purdue's stadium. I kind of wish it had been in Ohio Stadium, but you take what you can get."

Huffman has continued to closely follow the rivalry between Ohio State and Michigan ever since he left the program. As a season-ticket holder, Huffman went to plenty of Buckeye games and even traveled to Ann Arbor to see them take on Michigan on several occasions after he graduated.

Huffman still carries the affinity for the Buckeyes that he's had since he was an child and has been crushed by the Wolverines' recent winning streak.

"It's been brutal," Huffman said. "We had a great run. I remember being at the (2018) game at home when they couldn't stop us from scoring. But for me, 100 (points) is not enough. It's been hard, man. It just tears you up, but it's the current team's burden to carry."

Ohio State's recent losing streak doesn't mean Huffman is pessimistic about its chances against Michigan this year.

"The Buckeyes are taking them down up there," Huffman said. "I think our defense is going to shake up (Michigan quarterback Bryce) Underwood, and our offense is going to protect (Ohio State quarterback Julian) Sayin, and we're going to get some payback."

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Buckeyes Add Two More 2026 Commitments

Ohio State’s impressive streak of recruiting in November has continued, with commitments from Lebanon, Ohio, three-star tight end Nick Lautar (6-5, 230) on Nov. 16, and Hoschton (Ga.) Mill Creek four-star linebacker Braxton Rembert (6-5, 200) on Nov. 18.

RECRUITING
OUTLOOK
Greg Wilson

Both prospects flipped from other schools, with Lautar backing off a Louisville pledge and Rembert going back on his commitment to Wake Forest.

Lautar is the only tight end in the Buckeyes’ class now after Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School three-star Corbyn Fordham (6-4, 215) flipped to Florida State in October.

It was seemingly an easy decision for Lautar, who didn’t post on Twitter about his scholarship offer from Ohio State until right before the Buckeyes’ 48-10 win over UCLA on Nov. 15 began. He needed just a day to decide that he wanted to be in Columbus.

Lautar is the No. 542 player in the country, the No. 29 tight end and the No. 29 player in the state of Ohio, according to the 247Sports composite. Rembert is ranked the No. 358 player in the country, the No. 22 linebacker and the No. 41 player in Georgia.

Rembert is the third linebacker in the Buckeyes’ class, joining Cleveland Glenville four-star Cincere Johnson (6-3, 222) and Lewis Center (Ohio) Olentangy four-star CJ Sanna (6-3, 225).

If Ohio State signs each of them, it will be the second straight year that linebackers coach James Laurinaitis is able to land three in one cycle after Riley Pettijohn, TJ Alford and Eli Lee joined OSU in the 2025 class.

In his senior season, Rembert has 56 tackles, 11 for loss, nine sacks, six passes broken up, three forced fumbles and an interception.

Lautar and Rembert were the sixth and seventh prospects added to the 2026 class just in November, which could have something to do with a new program philosophy that head coach Ryan Day spoke about again on Nov. 18.

“Our philosophy coming into the season was that, for a lot of reasons, we wanted to be able to identify the guys who really played well their senior year, and use that as an evaluation tool, maybe even more than we have in the past,” Day said. “One of the biggest reasons is that these are truly investments now, in terms of resources. We have to make sure that we’re right in what we’re doing.

“It’s not about winning signing day. It’s about them coming here and having success. If they have success, we have success. If they fail, we fail. We have to make sure that this is a relationship that works on both ends. We also have to make sure

that these are guys that fit our culture and want to be here.”

Four-Star OT Joins 2027 Class

Ohio State also added to the 2027 class since BSB last went to press, with Richmond (Va.) Godwin four-star offensive tackle Brody McNeel (6-5, 285) committing to the Buckeyes on Nov. 18.

McNeel is already the third offensive lineman in the 2027 class, giving offensive line coach Tyler Bowen a great start to the cycle.

He joins Liberty Center, Ohio, four-star interior offensive lineman Kellen Wymer (6-5, 265) and St. Clairsville, Ohio, three-star interior offensive lineman Mason Wilt (6-5, 295) in the class. Both Wymer and Wilt committed on Nov. 2, and Buckeye Scoop recruiting analyst Bill Greene likes the additions to the class.

“Wilt, McNeel and Wymer, all of them look like they came from the same family to me,” Greene said. “When I watch each of those kids on film, they all do a lot of the same things. They have great bodies, and they’ve all got good feet. I like them all.”

McNeel is ranked the No. 234 player in the country, the No. 23 offensive tackle and the No. 3 player in Virginia.

He is the seventh commitment in the class of 2027 overall for the Buckeyes, helping them to an early No. 3 spot in the team rankings. McNeel joins Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne five-star wide receiver Jamier Brown (5-11, 170); Cibolo (Texas) Steele four-star safety Eli Johnson (6-3, 200); Huntington Beach, Calif., four-star quarterback Brady Edmunds (6-5, 220); Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna three-star safety Angelo Smith; Wymer; and Wilt.

Wymer got his initial scholarship offer from Ohio State on June 23 and took an unofficial visit to Columbus for the season-opening 14-7 win over Texas on Aug. 31 before visiting again for the 48-10 win over UCLA on Nov. 15. He felt like he had seen enough to commit to Bowen and the Buckeyes.

After his visit for the win over the Longhorns, McNeel was very impressed with Ohio State.

“I definitely have very positive and great thoughts about Ohio State,” McNeel told 247Sports. “I really love my time there every time, and it’s truly an amazing place. It seems like a great place to be, especially for an offensive lineman. It was really awesome. It was honestly my first big college football game I’ve ever been to, and it definitely blew past my expectations. Being around all the talent with the recruits and players was really great. I even got to meet with some former OSU players, which was really cool. Overall, the experience was perfect.”

Visitors For Rutgers

It wasn’t the most crowded visitor list when the Buckeyes hosted Rutgers on Nov. 22 and beat the Scarlet Knights 42-9.

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	
Khmarl 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	
Nick Lautar	TE	6-5	230	★★★	Lebanon, Ohio	
Jamir Perez	DL	6-4	360	★★★	Cleveland Glenville	
Dre Quinn	DL	6-4	228	★★★★	Buford, Ga	
Braxton Rembert	LB	6-5	200	★★★★	Hoschton (Ga.) Mill Creek	
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	
Brody McNeel	OT	6-5	285	★★★★	Richmond (Va.) Godwin	
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	

It was the last opportunity to host recruits on campus for a game until next season, even if somehow OSU ends up hosting a College Football Playoff game in the first round, since teams aren’t allowed to host visitors during those games.

But while some of the bigger names weren’t on campus for the game, the Buckeyes still had a good number of players there to witness the win.

Committed players who made the trip to Columbus in the 2026 class were Akron Hoban four-star offensive tackle Sam Greer (6-8, 315), Bessemer (Ala.) City four-star defensive lineman Emanuel Ruffin (6-4, 295) and Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward three-star interior offensive lineman Mason Wilhelm (6-4, 285).

Other players in the 2026 class who were on campus were Hamilton, Ohio, three-star defensive lineman Mason Holbrook (6-4, 260), Greensboro (N.C.) Dudley athlete Maurice Cameron Jr., and Columbus St. Francis de Sales defensive

end and Army commit Frankie McAllister (6-5, 220).

The 2027 class was more well-represented than any other at the game, with Greenwich (Conn.) Country Day four-star defensive end Mekai Brown (6-7, 230); Roswell (Ga.) Blessed Trinity Catholic five-star defensive end DJ Jacobs (6-5, 225); North Stafford, Va., three-star safety Kenaz Sullivan (6-0, 180); New Madison (Ohio) Tri-Village offensive tackle Dominic Black (6-5, 290); and Powell (Ohio) Olentangy Liberty long snapper Colton Wagner (6-2, 185) on campus.

Jacobs was the highest-rated of any prospect who was at the game. He is ranked No. 8 overall in his class and the No. 1 defensive end.

In the 2028 and 2029 classes, respectively, were Philadelphia Imhotep Institute cornerback Kaleb Woseley (6-0, 160) and El Paso (Texas) Pebble Hills tight end Noah Tarrant (6-4, 195).

ASK AN ANALYST

with Bill Greene of Buckeye Scoop

Lebanon, Ohio, three-star tight end Nick Lautar (6-5, 230) was offered by Ohio State on Nov. 15 and committed on Nov. 16. Have you seen him play? What does he add to the 2026 class?

"I haven't seen him in person. I've watched the film, and I've always said for years, I'm the guy who hates comparisons, because no two kids are alike, but he reminds me of (Ohio State senior tight end) Bennett Christian a lot, when Bennett Christian was a senior in high school. I like Nick Lautar. The thing with tight ends, so much of their value is the program they commit to, and they're all different.

"If you pick the wrong school, you're not going to fit, and you're not going to play, but at Ohio State, he fits. (Ohio State) has three on the field sometimes, two a lot of times, and he fits with everybody they put on the field. He's in that family with those guys, but he reminds me of Bennett Christian the most. In terms of fitting in with Ohio State, he's perfect. He's a 6-5 kid who is going to end up playing at 250 pounds. He's not going to be a jet down the seam guy (like Atlanta Falcons tight end) Kyle Pitts. He's not that kind of guy, but he's the kind of guy they win championships with. I would be all in on Nick Lautar. I think he's a good grab for them."

Hoschton (Ga.) Mill Creek four-star linebacker Braxton Rembert (6-5, 200) flipped from Wake Forest to Ohio State on Nov. 18. What do you make of him as a prospect?

"I wrote him up a while ago on Buckeye Scoop. I hate criticizing anybody's rankings, but this guy's

ranked way too low. I think he's going to get the Buckeye bump that everybody gets, and his is going to be deserved. This is a 6-5 kid who can run. He's so active, and if you watch his film, he's good in coverage, which is hard for a kid that size to be able to flip his hips and move his feet. He's going to play at 225-230 pounds. I don't know that he's Arvell Reese, but he's probably a combo of the best of Arvell Reese and the best of Sonny Styles. There's no way this kid should be ranked as low as he is, in my opinion. I hate criticizing rankings, because I know what it feels like, but in all honesty, I think this kid's good, real good."

Ohio State has already added three offensive linemen to the 2027 class. Do you think this is a full change in philosophy when it comes to the position?

"No. The one thing about these guys is they're all tackles, and I love that. When I first started doing this, which was around 2000, I worked for a guy named Duane Long. He's now passed away, but he was one of the first guys to really rank kids and be known for it. His thing, which I kind of agree with, not as strongly as he did, but he always said, recruit all tackles and then move the ones who fill out to guard, but you're going to have the most athletic kids you could have.

"If you're going to take early guys, I like taking tackles, and I think every one of those kids are going to be tackles, and the ones who aren't – if St. Clairsville, Ohio, three-star offensive lineman Mason Wilt (6-5, 295) ends up playing at 325 pounds, then move

him inside to guard – you're going to have an athletic guard. I like all three of them. Offensive linemen develop so slowly, they're not going to be what you see today, as compared to someone like Gibsonia (Pa.) Pine-Richland four-star cornerback Jay Timmons (5-11, 185). Jay Timmons, we pretty much know what he's going to be in college. These guys, we have no clue, but I like them all, and I would take them all."

Ryan Day said they waited on a lot of 2026 prospects so that they could see their senior film. What do you think of that approach, and how do you think it has worked out for Ohio State?

"I think it makes sense on the one hand, and it's something good to tell the media, but would they have taken Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward three-star offensive tackle Mason Wilhelm (6-4, 285) if they'd have landed some of those offensive linemen they chased earlier? I think it's a little bit of spin on, you got beat on a lot of guys, but it's still one of the top classes in the country. Would they have taken Mason Wilhelm or Braxton Rembert if they had gotten some of the other kids? Nick Lautar, would they have taken him? They might be totally filled with those positions right now if they'd gotten some of the guys they offered early and really chased hard who committed elsewhere. On one hand, I get it, and on the other hand, it seems like a little bit of spin to me that you got beat on some guys you wanted, but this is a great class. It's going to be a top-five class, and you build top-five, top-10 classes every year you're going to compete for championships."

Buckeyes Have Three Ranked No. 1

When Rivals made its most recent update to its 2026 recruiting rankings, Ohio State was well represented at the top of different positions.

In the rankings, the Buckeyes had three different players ranked No. 1 at their respective spots. Those three are Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star wide receiver Chris Henry Jr. (6-5, 205), Gibsonia (Pa.) Pine-Richland four-star cornerback Jay Timmons (5-11, 185) and Gardena (Calif.) Junipero Serra four-star defensive end Khary Wilder (6-4, 260).

Wilder is listed as a defensive tackle on recruiting websites but is being recruited by Ohio State as an edge rusher. There are two defensive ends ahead of Wilder on the list, with Washington (D.C.) Gonzaga five-star Michigan commit Carter Meadows (6-6, 225) and Charlotte (N.C.) Myers Park five-star Notre Dame commit Rodney Dunham (6-4, 227) at No. 6 and No. 10 overall, respectively, while Wilder is at No. 11.

Timmons is ranked the No. 12 prospect in the country by Rivals, and Henry is the No. 15 player.

By 247Sports composite rankings – which aggregates the 247Sports, ESPN and Rivals rankings and takes the average for each recruit – Wilder is the No. 42 player in the country and the No. 2 defensive lineman, Henry is No. 10 in the nation and the No. 1 receiver, and Timmons is the No. 64 player in the country and the No. 7 cornerback.

Timmons was ranked as low as a three-star player as recently as a year ago, but his senior film has been enough to make him shoot up the rankings and made Ohio State notice him as well. Timmons was first committed to Indiana before flipping to Florida State on June 24. Then he

flipped to the Buckeyes on Nov. 6.

2028 QB Commits To Georgia

The Buckeyes missed on Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy five-star quarterback Jayden Wade (6-3, 190), who committed to Georgia on Nov. 16 over Ohio State and Texas.

He is the No. 4 player in the country, the No. 1-ranked quarterback and the No. 3 player in Florida.

IMG Academy head coach Greg Studrawa, the former OSU offensive line coach, made a comparison of his quarterback that might have Ohio State fans hop-

ing the Buckeyes can flip the five-star over the next couple of years.

"Cerebrally, he reminds me of C.J. Stroud," Studrawa said. "He always wants to study the game. I spent so much time with C.J. talking about protections and all of those kinds of things. As a thrower, (Jayden) reminds me of him a lot, too, and then just how he wants to learn.

"He's a young guy. We have to be careful about putting too much on him. Everyone wants to tell him how great he is and how he can do all these things. You put that all on his plate, and it can be too much to carry. So, what I want to do is put him in a position so that what we ask

him to execute, he can do it at a high level. Then we can add. But talent-wise – he can run, he's smart, he's a great leader, he's got a good arm, and he makes really good decisions."

Wade was first offered by Ohio State on May 13, but Georgia had made him its top priority in the 2028 class, which paid off.

It's still very early in the process for the 2028 class, but the Buckeyes have extended scholarship offers to six other quarterbacks already and have hosted many on visits.

Continued On Page 32



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Top 2027 Safety Is On Ohio State’s Radar

Continued From Page 31

Top Lists For Top Prospects

Ohio State was yet again included when prospects narrowed down their scholarship lists since BSB last went to press.

For Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star cornerback Aaryn Washington (6-0, 160), the Buckeyes are in his top five schools. He included them along with Alabama, Nebraska, Washington and USC.

Washington has also already decided when he will commit. He set the date he will announce his pledge as Jan. 10, 2026, which gives him some time to consider his options. Importantly, the Buckeyes and Crimson Tide seem likely to make the College Football Playoff, and if they make runs through the bracket, it could be tougher to recruit Washington until then.

Washington is the No. 82 player in the country, the No. 9 cornerback and the No. 9 player in California.

Ruston, La., five-star tight end Ahmad Hudson (6-7, 230) also narrowed down his scholarship offers but kept 12 on his list. He included Ohio State with Alabama, Auburn, Florida, LSU, Miami (Fla.) Nebraska, Ole Miss, Oregon, Texas A&M,

Texas and USC.

Hudson is considered the No. 19 player in the country, the top tight end in the 2027 class and the No. 2 player in Louisiana.

The Buckeyes were included in the top 12 for Birmingham (Ala.) Ramsay four-star defensive lineman Karlos May (6-4, 305) as well. He included them alongside Alabama, Auburn, Florida State, Georgia, Missouri, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas and Vanderbilt.

May is the No. 200 player in the country, the No. 24 defensive lineman and the No. 6 player in Alabama in the 2027 class.

Buckeyes Send New Offers

Ohio State was also active, sending more scholarship offers to recruits since BSB last went to press. Here’s a look at the prospects who received offers from the Buckeyes.

- **San Diego Cathedral Catholic five-star safety Honor Fa’alave-Johnson (6-0, 170)** – Fa’alave-Johnson is the No. 16 player in the 2027 class, the No. 1 safety and the No. 1 player in California. He holds 37 Division I offers, a list that includes Alabama, Georgia, Miami (Fla.)

Michigan, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Oregon, Penn State, Texas and USC, among many others.

- **Baltimore St. Frances Academy four-star athlete Jermaine Smith Jr. (6-5, 215)** – The No. 99 player in the country, No. 9 athlete and No. 4 player in Maryland, Smith got an offer from the Buckeyes when he was on campus for the win over UCLA. He is in the 2028 class and holds 19 Division I offers, which includes Florida State, Georgia, Miami (Fla.), Ole Miss, Texas A&M, USC and Vanderbilt.

- **Philadelphia Roman Catholic safety Coron Russell Jr. (6-2, 185)** – Russell was also in Columbus for the win over the Bruins when he received his offer from Ohio State. He is in the 2029 class and is still unranked. He holds just two Division I offers, according to 247Sports, with the Buckeyes and South Carolina being the only two programs to extend him an offer. Getting involved in his recruitment early could be important for safeties coach Matt Guerrieri, if that is something that Russell ends up valuing.

- **Richmond (Va.) Huguenot four-star wide receiver Iveon Lewis (6-2, 185)** – Lewis is the No. 290 prospect in the 2027 class, the No. 37 wide receiver

and the No. 5 player in Virginia. He holds 26 Division I offers, including offers from Florida State, Indiana, Maryland, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Penn State, Rutgers, South Carolina, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

Other Notes And Tidbits

- Ohio State missed out on Waxahachie, Texas, five-star safety JayQuan Snell (6-3, 198), who committed to Texas A&M on Nov. 16 over the Buckeyes and Texas. Snell is the No. 36 player in the 2027 class, the No. 4 safety and the No. 8 player in the state of Texas.

- The Buckeyes’ great month of November on the recruiting trail didn’t extend to every battle they were in. Former Penn State commitment Kevin Brown (6-5, 270), a four-star offensive tackle from Harrisburg, Pa., pledged his services to West Virginia on Nov. 18, just two days after decommitting from the Nittany Lions. Brown visited Ohio State on Nov. 1 for Ohio State’s 38-14 win over Penn State, and Bowen made the four-star a priority, making sure he waited for Brown to walk off the field with him after the win.

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago — 1990

Tony Knez was proving that more than just quality quarterbacks were produced at Boardman High School in Youngstown, Ohio.

Boardman was the high school alma mater of Cleveland Browns quarterback Bernie Kosar, and that year’s starter at quarterback, John Ryan, was a highly regarded prep quarterback who threw for 1,986 yards and 18 touchdowns.

But possibly the best football player at Boardman that year was Knez, a 6-4, 220-pounder who played an outside linebacker/defensive end position.

Knez made about 100 tackles that year and had nine sacks. Those numbers were good enough to make college recruiters from Ohio State, Miami (Fla.), Tennessee and Kansas sit up and take notice.

30 Years Ago — 1995

Jerry Westbrook of Boca Raton (Fla.) Pope John Paul II enjoyed his official visit to Ohio State for the Nov. 11 game against Illinois, even though it was played in near-blizzard conditions.

“Actually, the weather was nicer than I thought it would be,” he said. “I thought it would be worse.”

Westbrook rushed for 1,206 yards and 12 touchdowns in his team’s first nine games that year, including a 217-yard effort that had him rip off runs of 77, 30 and 88 yards for scores against Cocoa Beach on Nov. 3.

He played the season at fullback, tailback and split end, but saw himself as a college tailback.

OSU defensive back Kevin Griffin served as Westbrook’s host during his visit.

“I liked everything up there, and it was a great experience for me,” he said. “The guys were great, and the coaching staff was great. Everybody made me feel welcome.”

25 Years Ago — 2000

Dublin (Ohio) Coffman offensive lineman Adam Olds came through with a big senior season, according to Coffman coach Eric Tudor.

Olds had committed to OSU the previous March.

“He did a fantastic job for us this year,” Tudor said. “He elevated his game from his junior year to his senior year.

“A lot of times, when a player gets an offer early, you wonder how they will react. Adam was the complete opposite of that. He went out to get better every day, and he has become an outstanding offensive lineman.”

Playing at center, Olds earned first-team All-Central District honors in Division I that season.

20 Years Ago — 2005

Merrillville, Ind., defensive tackle Dexter Larimore had spent each of the first two weekends in November trying to sort out his recruitment. The picture was becoming a bit clearer.

Heading into his senior season, Larimore’s top offers were from schools such as Indiana and Illinois. But then Ohio State extended a scholarship offer shortly after the beginning of the season, and Michigan soon followed suit.

After a visit to Indiana the first weekend of November and a trip to Ann Arbor to see Michigan take on the Hoosiers the weekend of Nov. 2, it was becoming evident that Michigan and Ohio State were Larimore’s front-runners.

“It went very well,” Larimore told BSB of his trip to Ann Arbor. “They’ve picked up their recruiting a lot. I thought it was a very good visit.

“(Michigan coach Lloyd) Carr said they really want me. He can see me playing there, and hopefully in a couple of years I can make a difference, he said.”

15 Years Ago — 2010

Curtis Grant had continually put his recruitment on the back burner throughout his senior season, but that had not stopped the nation’s No. 3 outside linebacker prospect from figuring out which schools were interested in him.

The athlete from Richmond (Va.) Hermitage said he received weekly phone calls from OSU, Clemson, Virginia, Michigan, Florida, Georgia and LSU. Of that group, he had taken unofficial visits to see everyone, minus the Buckeyes and Wolverines.

That could have changed once his season ended.

“I’ve been to all of them except Michigan and Ohio State,” he said. “I want to go up there and check those guys out. Hopefully, I can sit down and think about it and see if I can take officials to those two.”

10 Years Ago — 2015

The coaching carousel at the end of the season could have been an all-timer, with a dozen FBS coaches already on their way out and still one week left in the regular season.

One job in particular could have had big ramifications on Ohio State’s recruiting, however. With Florida State recruiting well under Jimbo Fisher and Florida picking up steam thanks to the immediate progress of Jim McElwain, a big-time hire by Miami (Fla.) could be a game-changer for the state of Florida.

If all three schools were to be recruiting at a high level at the same time, it would only add to Ohio State’s difficulty in pulling top prospects out of the Sunshine State. That task was difficult enough as it was – although the Buckeyes had a reasonable amount of success – but awakening the south Florida power (at

least from a recruiting standpoint) might have made OSU’s efforts down south even more complicated.

“I think whoever Miami brings in is going to have an impact on all of these schools recruiting in South Florida,” Scout.com recruiting analyst Corey Bender told BSB. “I am not saying Miami has gone stale, but the last few years with the sanctions, there’s been a lot of big-time kids that have not given them a serious look, as they would if Miami had a steady coach at the helm.”

Five Years Ago — 2020

In a move that seemed like a foregone conclusion once he decommitted from Texas on Oct. 28, Southlake (Texas) Carroll five-star quarterback Quinn Ewers pledged his services to Ohio State on Nov. 19.

Ewers – who was considered the top-rated quarterback and No. 2 prospect overall in the class of 2022 – grew up rooting for the Longhorns and had been committed to the program since April. But upon reopening his recruitment, he said he didn’t have the opportunity to explore all of his options before making his initial decision.

Given the ongoing dead period that prevented coaches from recruiting on the road and prospects from visiting campus, one might have wondered how Ewers made up his mind so quickly. But it was worth noting that his relationship with Ohio State head coach Ryan Day dated back more than two years, after the Buckeyes offered him a scholarship following a strong performance at a one-day camp in June 2018.

One Year Ago — 2024

The Buckeyes received their first commitment in the 2027 class, and to nobody’s surprise, it was a five-star wide receiver, which seemed to have been a free space on the yearly recruiting class Bingo card with Brian Hartline on staff as wide receivers coach.

Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne five-star wide receiver Jamier Brown pledged his services to the Buckeyes on Nov. 23 shortly after the Buckeyes beat Indiana 38-15 in Ohio Stadium.

According to 247Sports’ composite ranking, Brown was the No. 2 wide receiver in the class and the sixth-best player in the country. He had shown interest in Auburn, Maryland, Notre Dame and Penn State and held 24 total scholarship offers. But he decided early on that he knew he wanted to be a Buckeye as an Ohio State fan.

Brown had taken multiple visits to Columbus, coming first for a recruiting camp on June 5, where he received his scholarship offer from Hartline. He was back for a game day when the Buckeyes beat Iowa 35-7, and while he wasn’t on campus for his commitment, he still felt he wanted to make it official.

Henderson Runs His Way Into Fans' Hearts

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

There are a few ways TreVeyon Henderson could have had his "welcome to the NFL" moment.

The New England Patriots' rookie running back from Ohio State might have been tackled by an All-Pro player he grew up watching or verbally jabbed by an opponent letting him know he wasn't in college anymore. Or possibly the realization that he just scored his first pro touchdown.

While all those are plausible, one sign that he has already left a mark in the league came away from the field when the Patriots had a few off days following their 27-14 win over the New York Jets on Nov. 13, a Thursday night.

Henderson attended a Boston Celtics game at TD Garden, as did several teammates. While they were front and center, literally with courtside seats from the tickets provided by the NBA team, Henderson was up in the stands on purpose, as he said in a video for Patriots.com.

"I told them to put me in the regular seats because I wanted to go undercover," he said. "I had a great time watching those guys, but I wasn't expecting to get put on the Jumbotron. It got a little crazy after that, but I still had a good time."

Suddenly, he was surrounded by well-wishers and autograph seekers.

"When they put me on a Jumbotron, I texted the person, 'You all should have just put me on courtside if I knew I was going to get put on a Jumbotron.'"

Henderson said next time if he wants to go incognito, he may just buy a ticket without letting anyone know he is there: "I might have to go to Ticketmaster next time."

That's what fame will do, and Henderson has earned it for his recent play as he grows more accustomed to the NFL and, more importantly, filling a role when starting running back Rhamondre Stevenson missed three straight games with a toe injury beginning Nov. 2 against Atlanta.

In that game, Henderson rushed for 55 yards on 14 carries and made four catches for 32 yards. He made a greater impact in the next two games.

In the 28-23 win over Tampa Bay on Nov. 9, he exploded for 147 yards on 14 rushes with two scores. The first was a 55-yarder in the third quarter to make it 21-10 for the Patriots, and he raced 69 yards in the fourth for the insurmountable 28-16 score with 1:31 left.

First-year Patriots coach Mike Vrabel, the former Buckeye defensive lineman and coach, praised Henderson's last score.

"We needed it," he said. "That was the one that we were talking about, just needing one play, and he hit it, and it was great to see him have that success."

Henderson became the first Patriots player in history with two 50-yard or more touchdowns in a game and the first since 2007 to have two 50-yard runs. Also, he and tight end Rob Gronkowski (Nov. 14, 2010) are the only New England rookies to score three TDs in a game.

Better And Better

In the aforementioned Jets game, with no

other games as a distraction, more people outside of OSU fandom were introduced to Henderson.

In a battle of Buckeyes, Henderson countered Jets quarterback Justin Fields' 5-yard touchdown with a pair of 7-yard runs before adding a 6-yard TD reception to make it 21-7. Fields threw a 22-yard TD in the third quarter, but that was as close as the Jets got as the Patriots moved to 9-2.

Henderson had a career-high 19 rushes for 62 yards and five catches on five targets for 31 yards. He was on the field for 59 of 67 (88.0 percent) of the offensive snaps.

"It was a big time for him stepping up, and it's been great for him to get all these reps, to keep getting these reps," quarterback Drake Maye said after the game. "He wants to be great. He's just showing up every day and asking questions. I think just continuing for him to keep going in the oncoming weeks and know that he and Mondre and our backs, we can create a good one-two thing going. Looking forward to having Mondre back, but TreVeyon stepped up huge."

It's no wonder when Maye was asked how he felt about the fans in Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Mass., chanting "MVP" to him, he cracked, "Yeah, may have been for TreVeyon tonight. He scored three touchdowns."

Vrabel was impressed by how Henderson handled the workload.

"I would say the best couple of runs he had were there late in the game when it was tough sledding, and we're in five-minute (package), and they know we're going to run, and they're blitzing and everything else," the coach said. "It looked like we were going to be short, and he's able to knife through there and keep his pads down and pick up a huge first down."

"He's executed, whether that's a check-down or a touchdown in the back of the end zone. No home runs tonight, but I thought he grinded out pretty much what was there. He helped us in a lot of ways tonight and saw the power push touchdown, which was really cool. So I'm happy every time that guys can help us and they can get into the end zone."

Henderson said he prayed that if given the opportunity in the absence of Stevenson that he would be up to the task.

"First and foremost, I thank God. I couldn't have done it without him," he said. "And I thank the guys up front who do the dirty work and make my job easier. I've got to credit those guys, of course."

"I've gotten to know my teammates really well just hearing their stories. It just makes you want to go the extra mile for those guys. When you get to connect with those guys, you put in the work with those guys. I'm thankful to be playing alongside them."

Henderson said his focus in training every day is improvement in all areas of his game.

"It's a journey," he said. "The NFL comes with a lot of highs and lows. I think the biggest thing is preparation going into the week, and with the reps that we have, just trying my best to take advantage of them, continuing to try and grow and get better as a player. My running backs coach does a good job of pushing us, and Coach Vrabel does a good job of pushing everyone. I think preparation is key."

Center Garrett Bradbury is excited by what the future holds for Henderson.

"Vrabel preaches that when you have a good opportunity to take advantage of it. You'll get more opportunities," Bradbury said. "It sucks with Rhamondre being out, but TreVeyon's taking advantage of that opportunity. He's running hard. I mean, everyone knows he can outrun you, but what people are seeing is he'll run through your face, too. He loves the O-line, coming and celebrating with the boys."

"He's an awesome young player. He's got a good head on his shoulders. I think faith comes first for him, and that tells you everything you need to know. He's doing a great job. We all know what he is, we all know what he can do."

Henderson was a second-round pick (No. 38) in the 2025 draft after completing a national championship season with the Buckeyes. He finished his four-year career ranked fifth on the OSU career rushing list with 3,761 yards, including bowl games, and is third on the scoring list with 48 touchdowns – 42 rushing, six receiving – in 47 games.

His speed was evident when he scored on a 66-yard run against Oregon in the national quarterfinals and a 75-yard catch-and-run against Texas in the semifinal.

Patriots fans quickly saw that when he took the kickoff to open the preseason and went 100 yards against the Washington Commanders on Aug. 8.

His profile continues to rise, but it will be

interesting to see what happens the rest of the season when Stevenson returns.

The veteran back entered the game against the Cincinnati Bengals on Nov. 23 sixth on the all-time Patriots rushing list with 3,345 yards. He came off the bench to have six carries for 5 yards in the 26-20 win for the Patriots (10-2).

Henderson started and rushed 18 times for 66 yards. He also made three catches for 15 yards.

Through his first 12 games, he had 558 yards on 118 attempts (4.7 average) and five touchdowns plus 29 receptions for 180 yards (6.2) and one TD.

Prior to the Cincinnati game, Sports Illustrated ranked him fifth in the race for NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year behind former OSU receiver Emeka Egbuka, the receiver from Tampa Bay, Indianapolis Colts tight end Tyler Warren, New York Giants quarterback Jaxson Dart and Carolina Panthers wide receiver Tetairoa McMillan.

"I've been just trying to trust the process, being present in the moment, and just trying to put in the days, each and every practice, just try to come to work," Henderson said. "During game time, whatever opportunity comes my way, just try my best to take advantage of it. At the end of the day, I want God to have his way, not my will, but his will be done."

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U-M, USC Opposition Delays Private Equity Deal

With Michigan and USC's resistance to the Big Ten's potential \$2.4 billion private equity deal, the negotiations between the conference and its suitor, UC Investments, have been paused, the investment firm said on Nov. 17.

BIG TEN NOTES Sam Cipriani

UC Investments said that before the organization moves forward with the deal with the Big Ten, all 18 schools within the conference must agree to the deal, which would ultimately provide funding and extend the conference's grant of rights through 2046.

"We remain convinced that the unity of the 18 Big Ten university members is the key to the success (of the deal)," said UC Investments in a statement. "We also recognize that some member institutions need more time to assess the benefits of their participation. UC Investments, likewise, requires some additional time to complete our due diligence as recent developments unfold and we continue to engage with the conference."

UC Investments also added in its statement that the organization will continue to work with Big Ten commissioner Tony Petitti and the conference to "allow all (Big Ten)

members to evaluate the benefits of our potential investment in Big Ten Enterprises."

Despite those within the conference's best efforts to sway Michigan and USC to take the deal, including multiple statements from Petitti, both universities have remained firm in their stances.

After the Michigan board of regents met on Nov. 20 to discuss the potential deal, Board President Mark Bernstein said the university remains opposed to the proposal while reaffirming its commitment to the Big Ten and addressing athletic department financial challenges.

"The University of Michigan Board of Regents met today to discuss the current Big Ten Enterprises proposal," Bernstein said. "We remain opposed to this deal. Importantly, we are committed to the Big Ten Conference and will continue to explore opportunities that address the pressing financial challenges facing Big Ten athletic departments."

Fired PSU Coach Franklin Gets New Job

Following a 12-year coaching career with Penn State, James Franklin has found a new home in Blacksburg, Va.

On Nov. 17, Franklin signed a five-year deal with Virginia Tech to become the football program's next head coach. Franklin's yearly salary with the Hokies has yet to be released.

In a statement, Franklin shared his en-

thusiasm for the opportunity ahead as Virginia Tech's next head coach.

"I'm honored and humbled to join the Hokie family," Franklin said. "My vision is simple: to restore unmatched excellence, to build something that lasts, and to serve this university, the commonwealth of Virginia and our amazing fan base with honor, integrity, and passion. I look forward to getting to work with our players, our staff, and the entire Virginia Tech community."

With Franklin signing a deal to become Virginia Tech's next head coach, Penn State's buyout of its former coach decreased significantly.

Penn State was originally projected to pay the head coach over \$49 million following his firing, but the parties renegotiated that settlement down to just \$9 million.

Virginia Tech athletic director Whit Babcock said in a statement that Franklin's hiring marks a transformative moment for the program, while expressing his excitement for what he thinks the new head coach can do for the Hokies program.

"James Franklin embodies the spirit, vision, and relentless pursuit of excellence that will elevate Virginia Tech football back on the national stage where it belongs," Babcock said. "This is a landmark moment for our program. James is a dynamic leader, a relentless recruiter, and a coach who has proven he can build and sustain elite, championship-caliber programs. We are thrilled to welcome him and his family to Blacksburg and to entrust him with the future of (Virginia Tech) football."

Franklin joined Virginia Tech after coaching at Penn State from 2014-25 following a stop at Vanderbilt from 2011-13 in his first head coaching gig. The Langhorne, Pa., native posted a 128-60 record over those 15 seasons as a head coach.

Petitti Presents 24-Team Format

According to Ross Dellenger of Yahoo

Sports, at a meeting between college football conference commissioners in Charlotte, N.C., on Nov. 17, Petitti presented a 24-team College Football Playoff format.

While power-conference officials agreed to keep discussing playoff models beyond the current 12-team setup, SEC commissioner Greg Sankey continues to publicly oppose the 24-team College Football Playoff and instead supports a 16-team playoff with five automatic qualifiers and 11 at-large bids.

With the Big Ten and SEC remaining at a stalemate, expectations are that the 12-team playoff will remain unchanged for next season. Any new format requires agreement between both conferences, and ESPN's Dec. 1 deadline for a decision is approaching rapidly.

Sankey said the SEC is content with the current 12-team playoff if the conferences are unable to reach a deal.

During discussions over the summer, Petitti said he wants a postseason model that broadens access and keeps more teams in the hunt deep into the year.

"I want more teams to feel like they're chasing that opportunity to compete for a national championship," Petitti said. "Teams can get hot late in the season. The fact that they lose a game early shouldn't disqualify them. (I want teams) to play more meaningful conference games as late in the season as possible."

Maryland Keeping Locksley, Upping Funding

Despite six straight losses following a 4-0 start to the season, Maryland athletic director Jim Smith cleared up the conjecture about the departure of head coach Mike Locksley following this season before another loss on Nov. 22 to Michigan.

Smith not only backed Locksley, but also said the Maryland athletic department would do even more to help provide the head coach and football program with the funding and materials it needs for success.

"We are working to strengthen our NIL support for 2026 and beyond and have already seen success for next year," Smith told ESPN. "We are prioritizing roster retention, recruiting and competing in the transfer portal."

Smith told ESPN that Maryland's roster retention largely centered on holding onto talented freshmen, including quarterback Malik Washington, running back DeJuan Williams – the Terrapins' leading rusher – as well as defensive ends Sidney Stewart and Zahir Mathis, who lead the team with seven and six sacks, respectively.

Smith said the athletic department expressed full confidence in Locksley, and the university will do what they can to help the head coach.

"We are optimistic about the young talent in our program and where we are in recruiting," Smith said. "Everyone involved with the football program is focused on giving Coach Locksley the resources to succeed in the Big Ten."

In eight seasons at Maryland, Locksley has earned a 37-48 record, but is just 2-15 in conference over the last two years.

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	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Indiana	8	0	1.000	11	0	1.000
Ohio State	8	0	1.000	11	0	1.000
Oregon	7	1	0.875	10	1	0.909
Michigan	7	1	0.875	9	2	0.818
USC	6	2	0.750	8	3	0.727
Washington	5	3	0.625	8	3	0.727
Iowa	5	3	0.625	7	4	0.636
Nebraska	4	4	0.500	7	4	0.636
Illinois	4	4	0.500	7	4	0.636
Minnesota	4	4	0.500	6	5	0.545
Northwestern	4	4	0.500	6	5	0.545
UCLA	3	5	0.375	3	8	0.273
Rutgers	2	6	0.250	5	6	0.455
Penn State	2	6	0.250	5	6	0.455
Wisconsin	2	6	0.250	4	7	0.364
Maryland	1	7	0.125	4	7	0.364
Michigan State	0	8	0.000	3	8	0.273
Purdue	0	8	0.000	2	9	0.182

Nov. 22 Games

Ohio State 42, Rutgers 9
Northwestern 38, Minnesota 35
Oregon 42, USC 27
Iowa 20, Michigan State 17
Michigan 45, Maryland 20
Penn State 37, Nebraska 10
Wisconsin 27, Illinois 10
Washington 48, UCLA 14

Nov. 28 Games

Iowa at Nebraska, noon
Indiana at Purdue, 7:30 p.m.

Nov. 29 Games

UCLA at USC, TBA
Oregon at Washington, TBA
Ohio State at Michigan, noon
Penn State at Rutgers, 3:30 p.m.
Wisconsin at Minnesota, 3:30 p.m.
Maryland at Michigan State, 7 p.m.
Northwestern at Illinois, 7:30 p.m.

All times Eastern

Ducks Top USC In BIG Clash

In the battle for third place in the Big Ten, Oregon (10-1, 7-1 Big Ten) bested USC (8-3, 6-2) 42-27 at Autzen Stadium in Eugene, Ore.

The Trojans battled early, taking a 7-0 lead just 5:06 in and hanging on to tie the Ducks at 14 to start the second quarter. However, two straight touchdowns from Oregon, including an 85-yard punt-return touchdown by Malik Benson, gave the Ducks a lead they would never relinquish.

Oregon was balanced offensively with quarterback Dante Moore completing 22 of 30 passes for 257 yards and two touchdowns, with one interception in the victory. Both of Moore's touchdown passes went to tight end Kenyon Sadiq, who led the Ducks with six catches for 72 yards. Oregon also rushed for three touchdowns, with senior running back Noah Whittington leading the backfield with 19 carries for 104 yards and a score.

Despite the loss, USC quarterback Jayden Maiava threw for 306 yards and three touchdown passes. The junior did throw two interceptions, one of which led to a Ducks touchdown.

The loss pushes the Trojans out of contention for a possible spot in the Big Ten Championship Game and makes a berth in the College Football Playoff extremely un-

likely.

Oregon, on the other hand, has now won 10 games for the fifth straight season and fourth under head coach Dan Lanning. The Ducks are knocking on the door of No. 1 Ohio State and No. 2 Indiana and could earn a Big Ten title game appearance if the Buckeyes slip up in their regular-season finale against Michigan.

Legacy QB Flips To U-M

Michigan has landed a familiar name in the 2026 recruiting class.

Three-star quarterback Tommy Carr, grandson of 1997 national championship head coach Lloyd Carr, has flipped his commitment from Miami (Ohio) to the Wolverines.

According to 247Sports' composite rankings, Tommy Carr is ranked the No. 855 overall player in the country, the No. 44 quarterback and the No. 16 player in the state of Michigan.

A product of Saline (Mich.) High School, the 6-3,190-pound quarterback dominated as a senior, completing 176 of 254 passes for 2,737 yards with 37 touchdowns and just six interceptions, while rushing 49 times for 276 yards and eight scores.

Carr also had a school-record nine touchdowns in a single game, as his efforts helped Saline to a 10-2 record and the second round of the Michigan Division I playoffs in 2025.

It will likely be tough for Carr to find playing time when he gets to Ann Arbor, with true freshman Bryce Underwood having two years of eligibility left.

Michigan has now landed 25 recruits in the class of 2026, including two five stars and 12 four-star athletes. The Wolverines hold the No. 11 recruiting class nationally.

Lloyd Carr coached Michigan for 13 seasons from 1995-2007, compiling a 122-40 record in his time in Ann Arbor. Lloyd Carr finished with a 7-6 record against Ohio State, falling in his final four attempts.



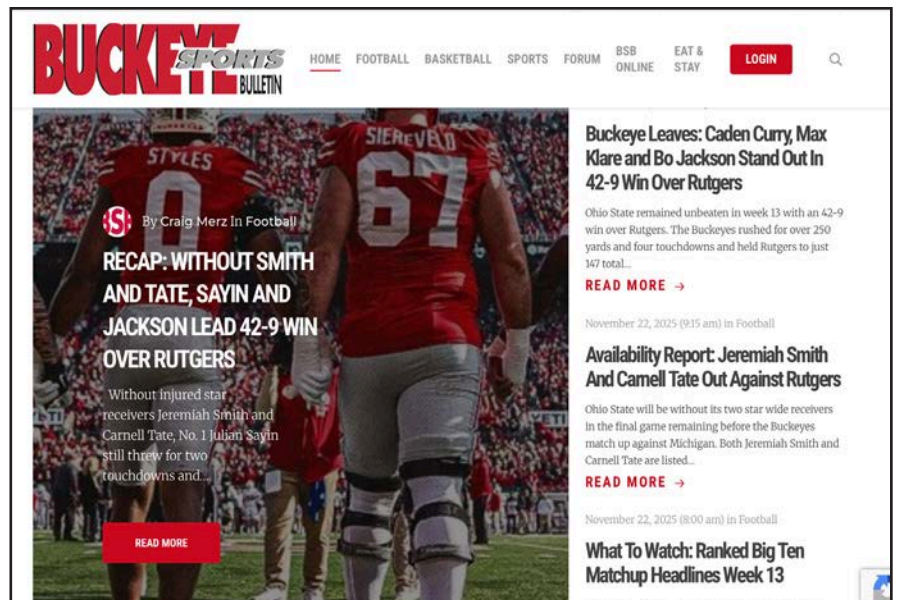
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Buckeyes Beat Irish Despite "Clunkiness"

Ohio State faced its first high-major opponent on Nov. 16 when Notre Dame came to Columbus, and the Buckeyes were able to remain undefeated with a game-winning left-handed layup from Christoph Tilly with 13 seconds remaining in the game to win 64-63.

COURT REPORT Greg Wilson

It wasn't the cleanest game for either team, but the Buckeyes were able to fix some of the issues they were facing early on in the contest.

"Certainly when you go into the game, you don't desire a clunkiness – almost like an old Big Ten rock fight where some stuff is going in and some stuff isn't," said head coach Jake Diebler after the game.

In the first half, Notre Dame took just four three-point shots, making one of them, but it was because the Irish didn't need to take deep shots. They scored 24 of their 34 first-half points in the paint and shot 14 of 24 from the field (58.3 percent).

At the same time, the Buckeyes were struggling from the field, shooting just 9 of 25 (36.0 percent) in the first half and just 4 of 15 (26.7 percent) from three-point range.

Diebler thought the Buckeyes' shot selection in the first half wasn't as good as it could have been.

"We don't necessarily go into a game saying we have to hit a target number of threes, but a lot of our threes in the first half, there wasn't a paint threat," Diebler said. "We want the paint to be threatened before we get a lot of our threes. We weren't playing through the paint well enough, and when we finally started to score for a stretch, a lot of it came from touching the paint."

The game-winning layup by Tilly was not designed to go to the center. He said that the play was actually designed for sophomore



SONNY BROCKWAY

VERSATILE — Center Christoph Tilly (13) scored the winning basket with 13 seconds left against Notre Dame on Nov. 16 then set a career high with seven assists vs. Western Michigan four days later.

guard John Mobley Jr.

"He made the right read, I guess," Tilly said. "Then I just drove the ball and made a layup."

When the second half began, it looked like it could be more of the same from the Buckeye defense, but they ended up turning the game around and holding Notre Dame to just 10-of-27 shooting in the frame (37.0 percent).

"I think our gaps got better, and we had a little bit better awareness with guys we could help off of," Diebler said. "Going into this game, we knew we had to guard the three-point line well, but we talked about not getting

into a situation where we were too extended and we exposed the paint. I thought we got a little too tight to our man defensively and weren't gapped up in the first half."

The Buckeyes kept that momentum going into Nov. 20 when they beat Western Michigan 91-58 and forced the Broncos to shoot just 33.9 percent from the field (21 of 62), including 5 of 22 from three-point range (22.7 percent).

It was the second time this season that the Buckeyes were able to hold their opponent to fewer than 60 points in a game, the other coming against App State on Nov. 11 in a 75-53 win.

Bynum Making Early Progress

Freshman forward Amare Bynum came to Ohio State as a four-star prospect ranked No. 61 in the country, a ranking he is proving that he was worthy of now that he is making an early impact for the Buckeyes in his first season with the team.

In the win over the Broncos, Bynum had his first career double-double, with 12 points and 10 rebounds, reaching those numbers in less than 19 minutes played.

"It feels great to have a double-double," Bynum said after the game. "I've been putting in the work every day with the coaches, and having my team believe in me feels great."

His final rebound came with just 58 seconds remaining in the game after he was subbed in with just under four minutes left. He said he wasn't aware that he was just one rebound away from a double-double when he came in.

Diebler gave credit to the freshman for the effort he's putting in but also said that even at his young age, Bynum understands the game more than most freshmen do.

"Most importantly, there's an aggressiveness to how he's played," Diebler said. "He's got some God-given gifts to help make him a great rebounder, but he's also been more comfortable understanding the game, what it requires and the defensive principles."

"It's his mentality as well. He's got great size (6-8, 240), physicality, strength and athleticism, and that combination is why we're so excited about the player he's growing into and the player he can become."

Bynum said that having a game like he did against the Broncos helps build his confidence, knowing that he can play at the level necessary to make it at the college level.

"It builds (my confidence) a lot seeing that my work is paying off and that I can actually be at this level," he said.

He said his favorite play in the win was an alley-oop dunk assisted by Mobley on a fast break.

"Coming down the court, I was waiting for the defender to take a little step (toward me)," Mobley said. "Amare doesn't need too much space. As soon as he took that step, I threw it and I knew Amare was going to make the play."

Through five games this season, Bynum was averaging 7.8 points and 4.2 rebounds per game and had been playing important minutes for Ohio State. He was fifth on the team in points and fourth in rebounds.

Tilly Sets Career High In Assists

In the win over Western Michigan, Tilly set a career high in assists with seven. He previously had seven assists in the win over Ohio on Oct. 26, but since it was an exhibition game, the total didn't count toward his stats.

His previous high came on Jan. 25, 2024, when he was at Santa Clara. In a 94-71 win over Pepperdine, Tilly had six assists. That was the only time he reached six, making it to five assists three other times in his career.

Diebler has said many times how much of a difference Tilly's playmaking ability makes for the team as a 7-footer, but he emphasized it again after the win over the Broncos.

"It's not just the assist numbers, but his low turnover numbers," Diebler said. "When you watch us play offensively, we can play through a lot of different guys, and that makes us really hard to guard, especially when we're playing with pace."



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MEN'S BASKETBALL

“(Tilly’s) basketball IQ is really high. Complemented with his size and skill, it makes him very unique. It allows you to be creative offensively.”

Diebler said that Tilly had some of that playmaking ability when he was in the transfer portal, which is part of what interested the Buckeyes. But there was also a lot of work that went into changing his game in some ways, like having him shoot more or put the ball on the floor and drive to the rim.

“(When he was in the portal), you were talking to somebody who had been around the game for a long time and had built confidence in himself but also felt like there was another level he could get to,” Diebler said. “That combination, along with the quality of person he is, combined with the size and skill that you can see on film, gave us the confidence to say, ‘Hey, we can take this to another level.’

“He’s come in here and worked extremely hard. He’s shooting extra every day. He’s watching film. He’s eating right. We talk a lot about the margins, and some of our older guys set the tone with that, and he’s been one of them.”

Through five games, Tilly was tied for the team lead in assists (19) with Mobley and was second on the team in points per game, with 17.0, behind Bruce Thornton (22.4).

Tilly said after the game against Notre Dame that he isn’t that surprised about the way his season started because of how hard he’s worked to get to this point.

“I worked for this, so I’m confident in saying that,” Tilly said. “I’m just really happy that now it’s coming true.”

One of the biggest parts of Tilly’s game has been his ability to get to the free-throw line and knock down those shots. So far this year, he had been to the line for 37 attempts and made 30 of them (81.1 percent). In the game against Notre Dame, he made 10 of 13. In the 118-102 win over IU Indy to open the season, he was 9 of 13 from the charity stripe.

“I wasn’t doing that in the first half enough,” Tilly said after the win over Notre Dame. “I had to adjust that at halftime and just be more physical and finish through contact. Don’t try to get a foul, just focus on finishing and the fouls were just coming.

“I felt like I was in a good spot. Every time I caught the ball, I was just trying to read (the defense) and be aggressive because I knew that if I did my thing that good things were going to happen.”

The second-half approach worked out well for Tilly, going 8 of 11 from the free-throw line in the frame and scoring 14 of his 18 points against the Fighting Irish.

Royal Trying To Get Into Groove

Due to the hip injury he’s been dealing with, junior forward Devin Royal has been in and out of the lineup at times this season.

He missed the Buckeyes’ win over App State and has been pulled from other games multiple times due to the same issue. Against Purdue Fort Wayne, sophomore guard Gabe Cupps was on the court to start the second half in Royal’s place.

With Royal’s injury, Diebler has also been trying to manage his time on the court, not keeping him in the game for long stretches.

Because of that, Royal’s transition to the small forward position has stalled slightly, although Diebler has still been pleased with what the junior has been able to do when he’s in games.

“Remember, he’s been in and out for a cou-

BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL (11-0, 8-0)

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, W 42-9; **29** at Michigan.

MEN'S BASKETBALL (5-0)

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, W 91-58; **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 (3-1)

Nov. 9 COPPIN STATE, W 88-59; **13** BELLARMINE, W 90-33; **16** at UConn, L 100-68; **19** KENT STATE, W 88-68; **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., NTS.

FENCING

Oct. 11 OSU OPEN, NTS; **12** OSU DUALS, Men 4-0, Women 4-0.
Nov. 8-9 OSU ELITE INVITATIONAL, Men 3-2, Women 4-1; **22-23** Western Invitational at USAF Academy, Colo., Men 5-1; Women 6-1
Jan. 17 St. John’s Invitational in Queens, N.Y.; **18** Dave Micahnik Penn Invitational in Philadelphia;

ple of weeks now,” Diebler said after the Western Michigan win. “I like that he’s shooting the ball with confidence. I want him to continue to be aggressive. He’s shooting it at a really good level for us.”

The entire reason Diebler made the switch, moving Royal from the four to the three spot, was to make the lineup bigger and help the team with rebounding. He believes that Royal has done what he’s supposed to in that aspect of the game, especially against Western Michigan, when he also put up his first double-double (10 points, 10 rebounds) of the young season.

“I thought his activity on the glass was good,” Diebler said. “That’s part of him being at the three, is giving us an advantage on the

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 (5-7, 1-5)

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, L 5-2, L 8-1; **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 (13-1-0, 11-1-0)

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, W 3-1, W 4-1; **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, 3rd/1,745 pts.

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, 1st/2,257 pts..
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 (6-20, 3-15)

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, L 3-1; **23** MICHIGAN STATE W, 3-1; **28** at Iowa; **29** at Nebraska.

WRESTLING (6-0)

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, W 44-0.
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.

game, while adding 3.8 rebounds and 3.2 assists.

He hasn’t needed to create on the offensive side this season as much as he has needed to in the past due to the ability of all five starters to score.

“When Bruce can have guys create something for him, he can get some easy looks,” Diebler said on Nov. 20. “He got some easy looks tonight (against Western Michigan) because other guys were able to create for him. Typically, in the past, it’s been him and (Mobley) who were the primary playmakers. Now you add Tilly, and I think Devin continues to grow his game. Having multiple guys like that is really helpful. It just makes us hard to guard.”

Buckeyes Remain Undefeated With Two Wins

By **GREG WILSON**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Ohio State faced its first test against Notre Dame on Nov. 16 and, after a close win, came back against Western Michigan on Nov. 20 and played a clean game on both sides of the ball in a 33-point blowout.

The Buckeyes remained undefeated early in the season thanks to senior center Christoph Tilly's game-winner against the Fighting Irish and his average of 17.0 points per game. He is being outscored by only senior guard Bruce Thornton, who is at 22.4 points per game this year.

Tilly Game-Winner Tops Notre Dame

Ohio State was tested by a high-major opponent for the first time this season and beat Notre Dame, 64-63, on Nov. 16 at Value City Arena with a game-winning shot by Tilly with 13 seconds left in the game.

The Buckeyes held a six-point lead with under seven minutes to go in the game but needed the late layup from Tilly for the win.

The Fighting Irish struck first with a three-pointer, which was immediately answered by sophomore guard John Mobley Jr. with a three of his own.

It took until 16:07 for the next points when junior forward Devin Royal knocked one down from beyond the arc, but Notre Dame would go on an 8-0 run after Royal's shot, leading to an 11-6 score at 14:36.

After a Tilly layup, the Buckeyes went on a streak of missing five straight shots from the field and got out to a 21-10 lead.

Senior guard Bruce Thornton finally ended the drought with a short jumper at 8:53, the start of a 12-4 run for the Buckeyes that brought them within three points at 25-22.

Neither team was able to take control for the rest of the half, but the Fighting Irish went into the locker room with a three-point lead, 34-31, behind 10 points from Jalen Haralson, who came off the bench for Notre Dame. Thornton had 11 points for the Buckeyes.

The Irish started the second half by outscoring the Buckeyes 8-3 in the first 3:18, capped by a three-point play from star point guard Markus Burton. Thornton answered with a three, and Notre Dame guard Sir Mohammed followed with a layup, answered by another Thornton bucket and later another three for a score of 44-42 Irish at 14:56.

The OSU defense stepped up over the next few minutes to force Notre Dame to go 1 of 5 from the field with a turnover, but the Buckeyes struggled as well and remained down by two points, 46-44 at 11:47 at a timeout.

Tilly tied the game up at 46 with two free throws 40 seconds later and gave the Buckeyes the lead at 10:12 on two more from the charity stripe. It was their first lead since there was 15:50 left in the first half. The Fighting Irish took the lead back with a three, and it was traded back and forth for a few possessions before Tilly's three-point play gave OSU a 53-51 lead with 8:34 to play.

After taking a 59-53 lead, OSU went 2:41 without a point, allowing the Irish to tie the game at 59 with 4:18 showing.

Thornton took the lead back with a three, and Tilly was sent back to the line the next time down the floor, but he missed both. He made up for the misses by blocking Burton on the other side to save two points, but Burton stole the ball from Thornton and was fouled, making two foul shots for a one-point game, 62-61, with 2:48 to play.

Notre Dame took a 63-62 lead that lasted until Tilly's contested layup at 13 seconds that put Ohio State in the lead, and a missed Burton three sealed the win for the Buckeyes.

Ohio State was led by Thornton, who had 24 points in the game on 8-of-15 shooting, while Tilly had 18 points, making 10 of 13 from the free-throw line. Royal had a team-leading six rebounds.

Notre Dame was led by Burton, who had 14 points on 3-of-14 shooting, also making 8 of 9 free throws, a defensive performance

from the Buckeyes that head coach Jake Diebler was pleased with.

"We talked about how we needed to make (Burton) inefficient," Diebler said after the win. "That was going to be critical. He was going to get his volume, but we had to make him inefficient."

OSU Runs Away With Win Over Broncos

Ohio State's defense was strong and 11 different Buckeyes scored in a 91-58 win over Western Michigan at Value City Arena on Nov. 20 in front of 8,294 fans.

The Buckeyes (5-0) forced 16 turnovers in the game – a season high – and held the Broncos (2-4) to just 21-of-62 shooting from the field (33.9 percent).

Ohio State went up 7-2 in the first 2:09 of the game thanks to a dunk by senior forward Brandon Noel. It took the Buckeyes 2:46 to score again, but Mobley's layup at 15:05 was the beginning of a quick 6-0 run for a 15-4 lead.

The Broncos were able to make it a six-point game, 18-12, nearly midway through the first half, but Ohio State's defense was able to force a shot-clock violation and a miss to allow Royal to get the lead back to double figures with two free throws at 9:10, which Mobley extended to 25-12 with his second three of the game.

Mobley's deep ball was part of a 17-0 run that was capped off by a three-pointer from freshman forward Amare Bynum, making the score 35-12 with 5:53 left in the half.

The run didn't stop there, however. After the Broncos finally scored on a Jayden Brewer jumper, Ohio State held them without a point until the 2:42 mark when Brewer made two free throws to make it 41-16.

After continuing their strong defensive start, the Buckeyes took a 49-24 lead into halftime after the Broncos made a buzzer-beating three by Brady Swartz to finish the frame. They forced Western Michigan to shoot just 26.7 percent from the field, which included just 3 of 12 from three-point range (25.0 percent). Ohio State forced eight turnovers in the half.

"We were able to put some things together tonight and play some complementary basketball offensively and defensively," Diebler said. "I thought our practice carried over at a higher level than what we've shown early in the season."

Ohio State started the second half efficiently on the offensive side of the ball, making four straight field goals after a pair of misses to extend its lead to 59-28 at 17:17 on a Tilly fast-break layup.

After a small scoring drought of 2:06, Mobley put more points on the board for the Buckeyes by converting an and-one on a fast break for a 65-30 lead. OSU extended its lead to 43 points at 73-30 on a three-pointer from sophomore guard Gabe Cupps, the last points of an 11-0 run.

The lead stayed around 40 points for the next few minutes as the Buckeyes sent

Ohio State 91, Western Michigan 58									
Nov. 20, 2025 Value City Arena • Columbus									
		1		2		F			
Western Michigan (2-4)		24		34		58			
Ohio State (5-0)		49		42		91			
WMU	Total	FG	FT	Reb.					
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Ward	9	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	3	0		
Burton	18	0-3	4-6	1-3	1	2	4		
Griffith	13	3-9	0-0	0-0	0	1	6		
Ryans	30	1-5	0-0	0-0	3	2	2		
Brewer	27	4-13	4-4	1-4	0	1	12		
Peterson	6	0-0	0-0	1-0	0	3	0		
Lewis	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Swartz	31	7-13	2-3	3-6	0	2	20		
Vis	23	2-8	1-2	1-2	2	0	5		
Sulaka	13	2-4	0-0	1-2	1	1	4		
Barnes	15	0-2	0-0	1-1	2	4	0		
Errica	9	2-4	0-0	0-0	0	0	5		
Sileu	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Totals	200	21-62	11-15	11-19	9	19	58		
Percentages: FG: 33.9%. FT: 73.3%. Three-point field goals: 5-22 (Swartz 4-8, Griffith 0-4, Errica 1-3, Ryans 0-2, Brewer 0-1). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 0. Turnovers: 16 (Barnes 4, Ryans 2, Brewer 2, Lewis 2, Team 2, Griffith, Peterson, Vis, Sulaka). Steals: 7 (Ward 2, Vis 2, Ryans, Brewer, Barnes).									
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.					
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Noel	21	4-5	0-0	1-2	0	1	8		
Royal	22	3-7	4-4	2-8	1	2	10		
Tilly	24	5-11	6-6	1-1	7	2	17		
Mobley Jr.	28	6-12	1-1	1-2	2	0	15		
Thornton	25	3-5	2-2	0-2	2	2	11		
Njegovan	16	2-4	1-3	2-4	2	3	5		
Bynum	19	5-11	1-2	5-5	1	1	12		
White	12	1-3	1-2	2-3	1	0	3		
Cupps	14	2-3	0-0	0-0	2	3	5		
Grujicic	11	0-3	2-2	1-2	1	0	2		
Chatman	7	1-1	0-0	0-1	0	0	3		
Nash	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Totals	200	32-65	18-23	17-32	19	14	91		
Percentages: FG: 49.2%. FT: 78.3%. Three-point field goals: 9-29 (Mobley 2-7, Thornton 3-4, Tilly 1-4, Bynum 1-4, Grujicic 0-3, Cupps 1-2, Royal 0-2, Chatman 1-1, Njegovan 0-1, White 0-1). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 1 (Njegovan). Turnovers: 12 (Royal 3, Chatman 2, Mobley, Thornton, Njegovan, Bynum, Cupps, Grujicic, Team). Steals: 7 (Cupps 2, Tilly, Mobley, Thornton, Bynum, Grujicic). Officials: Barlow, Brill, Burris. Attendance: 8,294.									

Ohio State 64, Notre Dame 63								
Nov. 16, 2025 Value City Arena • Columbus								
		1	2	F				
Notre Dame (3-1)		34	29	63				
Ohio State (4-0)		31	33	64				
Notre Dame	Total	FG	FT	Reb.				
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.	
Sundra	20	2-3	0-0	0-2	0	4	5	
Towt	29	4-5	0-3	2-10	2	3	8	
Burton	30	3-14	8-9	0-2	1	3	14	
Shrewsberry	32	4-7	1-2	0-4	0	1	11	
Mohammed	25	4-8	0-3	0-2	2	3	8	
Koehler	7	0-0	0-0	0-2	0	0	0	
Haralson	26	5-10	3-3	0-2	3	3	13	
Njie	11	1-2	0-0	1-2	0	2	2	
Imes	10	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	2	2	
Certa	8	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	
Frost	2	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	
Totals	200	24-51	12-20	7-29	8	21	63	
Percentages: FG: 47.1%. FT: 60.0%. Three-point field goals: 3-10 (Shrewsberry 2-3, Sundra 1-2, Mohammed 0-2, Burton 0-1, Njie 0-1, Frost 0-1). Team rebounds: 7. Blocked shots: 1 (Haralson). Turnovers: 13 (Burton 4, Haralson 3, Towt 2, Shrewsberry 2, Mohammed, Njie). Steals: 6 (Haralson 2, Sundra, Burton, Shrewsberry, Imes).								
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.				
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.	
Noel	19	0-0	0-0	0-1	2	0	0	
Royal	33	2-6	2-2	1-5	1	1	7	
Tilly	28	4-8	10-13	0-4	1	4	18	
Mobley Jr.	25	2-10	3-3	0-0	2	2	9	
Thornton	40	8-15	4-4	0-4	2	3	24	
Bynum	20	2-5	0-1	0-5	1	3	4	
White	9	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	1	0	
Cupps	15	1-3	0-0	0-2	1	0	2	
Njegovan	9	0-1	0-0	0-1	2	2	0	
Chatman	2	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	0	0	
Totals	200	29-62	18-24	10-29	12	16	64	
Percentages: FG: 38.0%. FT: 82.6%. Three-point field goals: 7-23 (Thornton 4-7, Mobley 2-5, Royal 1-3, Tilly 0-3, Bynum 0-2, Cupps 0-2, White 0-1). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 4 (Tilly 2, Noel, Cupps). Turnovers: 10 (Thornton 3, Mobley 2, Royal, Tilly, Bynum, Cupps). Steals: 6 (White 2, Noel, Thornton, Cupps, Njegovan). Officials: Anderson, Dorsey, Szelc. Attendance: 12,357.								

their starters back to the court with 9:15 left in the game after some rest. They were also unable to extend the lead, but the game was well in hand by that point.

The Buckeyes ultimately cleared the bench, even getting walk-on sophomore guard Braylen Nash into the game at 1:18, and Ohio State left with a 33-point victory.

Ohio State was led by Tilly, who had 17 points in the game along with two rebounds and seven assists. Mobley (15), Bynum (12), Thornton (11) and Royal (10) also reached double-digit points in the game.

Royal had his first double-double of the season, also adding 10 rebounds on the day. Bynum also had a double-double, the first of his career, with 10 boards of his own.

Swartz scored 20 points to lead the Broncos, and Brewer chipped in 12.

Before BSB next goes to press, Ohio State will have two more games, first hosting Mount St. Mary's on Nov. 25 (6:30 p.m., BTN), before going to Pittsburgh to play the second half of a home-and-home series against the Panthers on Nov. 28 (7 p.m., ESPN).

Gray Still Scoring Despite Cold Shooting Start

One thing senior guard Chance Gray made abundantly clear to anyone who would listen during the offseason was that she is capable of doing more than taking three-point shots.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Bobby Gorbett

A transfer from Oregon, Gray shot more than twice as many three-pointers as any other member of Ohio State's 2024-25 team. Although a shooter like Gray is never going to stop shooting from deep, she said during Big Ten media days that she wanted to show she could use other parts of her game.

"I want to get back to how I was during my first year in college, not just sticking to shooting threes," Gray said. "I have a lot more to my game – finishing, driving, mid-range – so I want to use a part of that. Going into the season, I want to be one of our best defenders."

To start this season, Gray has flashed the other parts of her game that she may not be known for. She has made 18 two-point field goals, which is the second most on the team so far this year, to average 14.5 points per game.

Unfortunately for Gray and the Buckeyes, she's needed to show the improvements she's made in her ability to convert from inside the arc because her three-point shot has not been very reliable. She had made only 5 of 24 three-point shots to start the season (20.8 percent).

"I know I'm a shooter, so I have to keep shooting. I'm just off to a slow start for the beginning of the season, but I know they'll fall eventually," Gray said of her shooting woes after Ohio State's 88-68 win over Kent State on Nov. 19. "I'm not really that concerned about it. I'm just glad I'm finishing with the two, but they'll get going eventually. I just have to keep shooting. If I stop shooting, that's a dig to my team. I'll just keep working at it, get some extra shots up, and they'll start falling."

No game better epitomized Gray's start to the season than Ohio State's win over Kent State. In that game, Gray went 1 of 7 from beyond the arc but still finished the game with 18 points, the second most on the team. Gray also added four assists and three rebounds in that game and credited the Buckeye coaching staff for helping her be able to make an impact despite her issues shooting the three-point shot.

"I work with (assistant coach) Katie (Smith) a lot and all my coaches to just make sure I'm finishing strong," Gray said. "Last year if my threes weren't falling, I didn't really contribute much. Even if they aren't falling right now, I still have a way to contribute whether it's assisting or getting to the basket, finishing strong through contact, just making sure I'm still contributing in ways that I need to, even if the threes aren't falling."



SONNY BROCKWAY

GRAY MATTERS — Senior guard Chance Gray is known for her three-point shooting, but when her shot has been off, as it has been at times this season, she's striving to contribute in other areas.

Lemmilä Sidelined With Lower-Leg Injury

Ohio State was not fully healthy against the Golden Flashes. Sophomore center Elsa Lemmilä missed the game due to what head coach Kevin McGuff described as a lower-leg injury.

Lemmilä, who has dealt with multiple injuries during her collegiate career, will likely not be out long with her latest injury. McGuff said just after Ohio State's win over Kent State that she was day-to-day with her injury.

Instead of replacing Lemmilä with the team's other center, Ella Hobbs, McGuff went with a smaller starting lineup against Kent State. Senior guard T'yana Todd made her first start as a Buckeye and finished the game with a season-high 15 points on 5-of-12 shooting, which included 3 of 8 from three-point range.

Lemmilä's injury meant another transfer, redshirt-freshman forward Kylee Kitts, had a different role to start the game. Often being Ohio State's tallest player on the court, Kitts had to match up against the Golden Flashes' center. Kitts said after the game that it wasn't too much of an adjustment to be Ohio State's de facto center.

"I normally don't guard the five, so it was a bit different," Kitts said. "I got some cheap

fouls I shouldn't have gotten for sure, but it was a little bit different. It wasn't too much of an adjustment. Like (Gray) said, I do it a lot in practice, so I'm used to playing the five a little bit."

Kitts picked up five fouls in the game, fouling out with 3:50 to go, but still made an impact during the 21 minutes she was out on the court. The transfer out of Florida finished the game with eight points on 3-of-9 shooting, tacked on four rebounds, including three offensive rebounds, and had a season-high three steals.

Kitts may not have taken the world by storm, but it was her second straight solid performance. In Ohio State's 100-68 loss to UConn on Nov. 16, Kitts went for season-high totals of nine points and 10 rebounds. The redshirt freshman wasn't completely satisfied with how she played against Kent State, but she still feels like she's continuing to improve to start the season.

"I would say so," said Kitts when asked if she thinks she's made improvements to start the season. "I think that today wasn't my best game, but I think that as they keep going, we'll continue to get better."

In the first half of their game against Kent State, it seemed like the Buckeyes especially missed their starting center. In the first two quarters, Ohio State allowed Kent

State to shoot 56.5 percent from the field and score 12 points in the paint.

On the other end, though, the Buckeyes tied a season-high total of 19 assists, leaving McGuff somewhat optimistic with how the small-ball lineup performed.

"I thought we did some good things," McGuff said. "I thought offensively, we had a lot of great opportunities, and we really didn't even shoot the ball very well tonight (41.3 percent and still scored 88. I think we could have had a great night on offense, because we shared the ball really well, but we didn't necessarily make shots. Our press was just OK in the first half, and they really made us pay."

OSU Defense Struggles Against UConn And KSU

Overall, the Buckeyes didn't have great defensive performances in either of their games against UConn and Kent State. Against the Huskies, Ohio State gave up 100 points on 39-of-75 shooting (52.0 percent), including 12 of 27 (44.4 percent) from three-point range.

The Buckeyes' usually effective full-court press only helped them to force 13 turnovers against the No. 1 team in the country.

In that game, the Buckeyes struggled to deal with the Huskies' length and size, giving up 54 points in the paint and 14 offensive rebounds. Of course, UConn is loaded with star players and is once again the favorite to win the national championship, but the problems the Buckeyes had in that game resurfaced against Kent State.

Although the Buckeyes' full-court press got going in the second half to force 19 turnovers in the final 20 minutes, the Golden Flashes still finished the game shooting an efficient 21 of 40 from the field (52.5 percent).

After the Kent State game, McGuff acknowledged that the Buckeyes need to improve in the half court defensively.

"We obviously have to get better," McGuff said. "We have to kind of merge the full court with the half court and make progress for us to be who we're capable of being."

Cambridge Named To Wooden Watch List

Sophomore point guard Jalon Cambridge was included on another preseason watch list on Nov. 18.

The Buckeyes' star guard was one of 50 players to be included on the watch list for the Wooden Award, given to the best player in the country at the end of the season. Cambridge, who was also included on the watch list for the Naismith Player of the Year, another award given to the best player in the country, is off to a great start this season. Through four games, Cambridge was averaging a team-leading 19.3 points, 6.5 rebounds and 3.5 assists per game and had come up with nine steals.

Former Ohio State forward Cotie McMahon was also included on the list. McMahon, a two-time All-America honorable mention at Ohio State, transferred to Ole Miss during the offseason. McMahon had helped the Rebels win their first four games, averaging 17.5 points and 6.5 rebounds so far this year.

Buckeyes Go 1-1 Against UConn and KSU

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

Ohio State (3-1) suffered its first loss of the season to No. 1 UConn (6-0) on Nov. 16 but bounced back with a 20-point win over Kent State on Nov. 19.

The Buckeyes struggled with defensive consistency in both games but also showed signs of offensive improvement over the two games.

OSU Defense Falters In Loss To UConn

Ohio State (2-1) flashed its offensive potential in its 100-68 road loss to No. 1 UConn (4-0) on Nov. 16 but was ultimately no match for the defending national champs. Playing in front of 14,115 fans at Peoples Bank Arena in Hartford, Conn., the Buckeyes finished the game shooting a respectable 27 of 59 (45.8 percent) from the field, including 8 of 25 from three-point range (32.0), but committed a season-high 24 turnovers and were outrebounded 40 to 31.

The Buckeyes' biggest issues came on the defensive end. Ohio State allowed UConn to shoot 39 of 75 from the field (52.0 percent) and score 54 points in the paint during its loss.

It certainly wasn't the result the Buckeyes were hoping for, but head coach Kevin McGuff said after the game that the experience gained against the Huskies will only make his team better.

"I knew this would be a challenge against UConn. They're such a great team and they're talented and well-coached, but I'm happy we had an opportunity to do it," McGuff said. "We're going to learn a lot from this game. We're going to watch the film, and we're going to try to get better."

Early on, Ohio State went toe to toe with the No. 1-ranked team in the country. The Buckeyes made three of their first four shots of the game, but because UConn connected on its first four shots, the Buckeyes trailed 10-7.

However, Ohio State surged in front with a 7-0 scoring run fueled by a layup and three-point jumper from junior guard Chance Gray to lead 14-10 at the 6:36 mark of the first.

The Buckeyes, who started the game connecting on six of their first seven field goals, finally cooled off, and UConn responded with its own 7-0 scoring run to go up 17-14.

The Buckeyes didn't go away, though. Junior guard Kennedy Cambridge, who came into the game shooting 0 of 4 from beyond the arc, connected on her second three-point jumper of the game at the 3:43 mark that tied the game at 17.

The Huskies continued their offensive efficiency in the first quarter, but Cambridge knocked down one more triple in the first quarter that cut UConn's lead to 25-24 with just over a minute to go in the opening frame. Blanca Quinonez capped the first-quarter scoring with a buzzer-beating layup to make it 27-24 after 10 minutes.

UConn started to create some separation in the second quarter. The Buckeyes didn't score in the first three minutes of the frame, and UConn went on an 8-0 run to extend its lead to 35-24.

The Buckeye offense woke up briefly after a timeout. McGuff's team scored six points over a 1:45 span to cut UConn's lead to nine, but the

Huskies went on another run to create a 50-30 lead at halftime.

In the final 5:02 of the first half, Ohio State was held scoreless, and on the other end, UConn scored 11 points as standout senior guard Azzi Fudd knocked down a pair of three-pointers in the last 80 seconds of the second quarter.

Any chance Ohio State had of mounting a second-half comeback was virtually eliminated early in the third quarter when the Huskies opened with a 15-3 scoring run to make it 65-33 with 6:44 to play in the frame.

Trailing by 32, Ohio State battled back in the middle of the third quarter with a 13-2 scoring run over 3:14. The Buckeye run cut UConn's lead to 67-46, but the OSU momentum was short-lived.

UConn outscored Ohio State 12-5 over the final three minutes of the third quarter to make it 79-51.

Ohio State scored the first four points of the fourth quarter to trail by 24 but subsequently failed to get any closer than 25 points behind UConn before ultimately falling by 32 points.

Sophomore point guard Jalonι Cambridge was Ohio State's leading scorer in the loss, with 17 points on 8-of-16 shooting, and also added six rebounds, one assist and a team-high three steals.

Kennedy Cambridge couldn't keep up her hot-shooting start, but she still finished the game with 10 points on 3-of-6 shooting. Red-shirt-freshman guard Kylee Kitts also had a good outing. She finished the game with nine points (4-of-7 shooting) and a team-high 10 rebounds. Senior guard T'yana Todd was also in double figures with 12 points.

UConn was led by sophomore forward Sarah Strong in the win. Strong finished the game with 29 points, 13 rebounds, seven assists, five steals and three blocks. Four other Huskies were in double figures, including Fudd with 19 and Quinonez with 18.

OSU Tops Kent State After Slow Start

Ohio State bounced back from a poor first-half performance to get back in the win column with an 88-68 win over Kent State.

After suffering their first loss of the season to UConn three days earlier, the Buckeyes let Kent State hang around in the first half. Allowing the Golden Flashes to shoot well over 50 percent from the field in the first two quarters, the Buckeyes clung to a 36-35 lead at halftime. Ohio State outscored its opposition 52-33 in the second half.

"We didn't play well in the second quarter, and they did," McGuff said of his team's performance. "Give them credit. And then I thought we kind of got ourselves together at halftime and played exceptionally well in the third quarter. We played pretty well in the fourth, but for us to make progress and get closer to who we're capable of being, we have to get a lot more consistent in how we're playing."

The Buckeyes got out to a fast start in their win. After early three-point baskets from Kennedy Cambridge and Todd, the Buckeyes held a 12-5 advantage with 5:29 to go in the first quarter.

However, a zone defense employed by the Golden Flashes started to give the Buckeyes issues offensively during the middle of the first quarter. Ohio State was held scoreless until

the 1:48 mark, and Kent State cut the lead to 12-10.

Todd helped push Ohio State's lead back to six with four straight points, and the lead would remain at six heading into the second quarter.

The Golden Flashes picked up where they left off in the first. They made a couple of layups early in the second quarter to cut Ohio State's lead to three points.

Ohio State's lead hovered around three points until Kent State went on a 7-0 run midway through the second quarter to jump in front 30-28 with 2:19 to go in the half.

Late three-point makes from Todd and red-shirt-freshman center Ella Hobbs helped the Buckeyes take their narrow one-point lead into halftime.

Ohio State looked like a completely different team to open the second half. The Buckeyes forced five turnovers in the first 3:43 of the third quarter to open with a 13-4 scoring run.

The Buckeyes took a pair of 12 point leads before the Golden Flashes scored five straight late in the third quarter to make the score 53-46 with 2:56 to go in the frame.

Ohio State took control of the game at the end of the quarter, closing with an 11-2 scoring run to make the score 64-48.

Kent State cut Ohio State's lead to 15 on its

UConn 100, Ohio State 68							
Nov. 16, 2025 Peoples Bank Arena • Hartford, Conn.							
		1	2	3	4	F	
Ohio State (2-1)		24	6	21	17	68	
UConn (4-0)		27	23	29	21	100	
Ohio State	Total	FT	Reb.				
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Kitts	33	4-7	0-1	2-8	0	5	9
Gray	31	4-12	0-0	0-2	2	1	9
K. Cambridge	29	3-6	1-2	2-0	1	2	10
Lemmilä	21	1-4	0-0	2-2	1	0	2
J. Cambridge	35	8-16	1-1	0-6	1	3	17
Todd	19	4-8	2-2	0-1	0	1	12
Watson	18	2-2	2-2	0-1	0	1	7
Biriuk	5	0-1	0-0	1-1	2	1	0
Martin	4	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Hobbs	3	1-2	0-1	0-1	0	0	2
Henry	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Totals	200	27-59	6-9	9-22	7	14	68
Percentages: FG: 45.8%. FT: 66.7%. Three-point field goals: 8-25. (Gray 1-6, K. Cambridge 3-4, Todd 2-4, J. Cambridge 0-4, Kitts 1-3, Watson 1-1, Lemmilä 0-1, Barium 0-1, Martin 0-1). Team rebounds: 2 Blocked shots: 6 (Kitts 3, Lemmilä, Watson, Biriuk). Turnovers: 24 (J. Cambridge 7, Lemmilä 4, Kitts 3, Gray 3, K. Cambridge 2, Todd 2, Watson 2, Biriuk). Steals: 6 (J. Cambridge 3, Lemmilä, K. Cambridge, Watson).							
UConn	Total	FT	Reb.				
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Strong	33	12-17	3-3	2-11	7	3	29
Williams	14	5-7	2-2	0-3	0	2	12
Arnold	28	0-3	0-0	1-1	5	3	0
Shade	20	4-8	0-0	2-0	4	3	10
Fudd	32	7-16	0-0	2-1	7	3	19
Quinonez	23	7-11	2-2	0-4	1	1	18
Heckel	19	0-2	1-2	0-0	2	2	1
Ziebell	17	1-5	0-0	1-2	3	2	3
El Alfy	7	2-3	0-0	4-2	0	0	4
Fisher	3	1-2	2-2	0-0	0	0	4
Ducharme	3	0-1	0-0	0-1	1	0	0
Patterson	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Totals	200	39-75	10-11	14-26	30	19	100
Percentages: FG: 52.0%. FT: 90.9%. Three-point field goals: 12-27 (Fudd 5-9, Ziebell 1-5, Strong 2-4, Quinonez 2-3, Shade 2-3, Arnold 0-1, Heckel 0-1, Fisher 0-1). Team rebounds: 3 Blocked shots: 6 (Strong 3, Fudd, Quinonez, Ziebell). Turnovers: 13 (Quinonez 5, Arnold 2, Shade 2, Fudd 2, Heckel, Ziebell). Steals: 14 (Strong 5, Shade 2, Fudd 2, Quinonez 2, Williams, Arnold, Heckel). Officials: Joseph Vaszily, Teresa Stuck, Saif Esho. Attendance: 14,115							

second possession of the fourth quarter on a three by Mya Babbitt, but Ohio State responded with a 10-4 scoring run to take a 76-55 lead with 5:31 to go.

Freshman guard Bryn Martin helped Ohio State solidify its 20-point win. She made two three-point baskets in the final five minutes of the game.

Jalonι Cambridge was Ohio State's leading scorer in the win. She finished the game with 19 points on 7-of-17 shooting and had five assists and four rebounds. Gray (18 points), Todd (15) and Kennedy Cambridge (10) each finished the game in double figures. As a team, Ohio State shot 31 of 75 from the field (41.3 percent) and 8 of 29 from three-point range (27.6 percent).

Although the Buckeyes won the game, they allowed the Golden Flashes to have an efficient shooting night. Kent State made 21 of 40 field goals (52.5 percent), including 7 of 14 (50.0 percent) from three-point range.

Babbitt was Kent State's leading scorer with 30 points, shooting 9 of 13 from the floor and 6 of 9 from long range.

Ohio State will participate in the Pink Flamingo Championship in the Bahamas before BSB next goes to press. The Buckeyes will play against Belmont on Nov. 24 (11 a.m., Flo College). Then they will play another game in the Bahamas two days later against either West Virginia or McNeese State.

Ohio State 88, Kent State 68							
Nov. 19, 2025 Value City Arena • Columbus							
		1	2	3	4	F	
Kent State (3-3)		12	23	13	20	68	
Ohio State (3-1)		18	18	28	24	88	
Kent State	Total	FT	Reb.				
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts
Hauser	2	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0
Gray	33	1-4	4-4	0-3	7	3	6
Babbitt	36	9-13	6-6	0-5	2	4	30
Rismiller	21	3-4	0-0	2-2	0	4	6
Tyler	32	5-10	3-4	0-1	1	2	13
Holmes	16	0-1	0-0	1-5	2	2	0
Thomas	25	2-2	3-4	0-1	0	4	7
Murray	8	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
Juzzo	2	0-0	0-0	2-3	0	0	0
Kalocay	23	1-6	3-4	0-0	0	5	6
Campanelli	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Klatt	0	0-2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Totals	200	21-40	19-22	8-26	12	25	68
Percentages: FG: 52.5%. FT: 86.4%. Three-point field goals: 7-14. (Babbitt 6-9, Kalocay 1-4, Gray 0-1). Team rebounds: 3 Blocked shots: 5 (Gray 2, Tyler, Holmes, Thomas). Turnovers: 29 (Gray 8, Babbitt 5, Kalocay 4, Holmes 3, Thomas 3, Murray 2, Hauser, Rismiller, Campanelli, Team). Steals: 2 (Thomas, Kalocay)							
Ohio State	Total	FT	Reb.				
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts
Kitts	22	3-9	2-3	3-1	1	5	8
Gray	31	7-16	3-4	0-3	4	4	18
K. Cambridge	28	3-5	3-4	6-1	4	3	10
Todd	29	5-12	2-2	2-2	4	3	15
J. Cambridge	35	7-17	5-8	3-1	5	3	19
Watson	13	1-7	2-2	1-1	0	1	4
Biriuk	9	0-2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Martin	11	2-3	0-0	0-0	0	2	6
Hobbs	19	3-4	0-0	1-1	1	0	7
Henry	3	0-0	1-2	0-1	0	1	1
Totals	200	31-75	18-25	17-12	19	22	88
Percentages: FG: 41.3%. FT: 72.0%. Three-point field goals: 8-29 (Todd 3-8, Gray 1-7, Watson 0-4, J. Cambridge 0-3, Watson 2-2, K. Cambridge 1-2, Hobbs 1-1, Kitts 0-1, Biriuk 0-1). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 2 (Kitts, J. Cambridge). Turnovers: 8 (Kitts, Gray, K. Cambridge, Todd, J. Cambridge, Watson, Biriuk, Team). Steals: 18 (K. Cambridge 4, Kitts 3, J. Cambridge 3, Todd 2, Watson 2, Martin 2, Gray, Hobbs). Officials: Xiomara Cruz-Johnson, Roy Gulbeyan, Maggie Tieman. Attendance: 4,617							

Ice Cold Rivalries Thaw As OSU Teammates

Combatants with sticks up one day. Teammates ready to stick up for each other the next. That's the world of hockey.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

In particular, that's the case for a pair of Ohio State freshmen – forward Landen Gunderson from Plymouth, Minn., and defenseman Bryce Ingles of Port Huron, Mich.

Despite their different backgrounds, they crossed paths playing in the United States Hockey League. In fact, they became rivals for their respective like-sounding teams – Gunderson for the Sioux City (Iowa) Musketeers and Ingles with the Sioux Falls (South Dakota) Stampede.

"We played Sioux Falls a lot last year, and we went at it a lot," Gunderson said, even though they knew each other had committed to Ohio State. "We talked about it. Then he actually high-sticked me in-game, chipped a few of my teeth."

He remembers eventually extracting revenge by bloodying Ingles' lip with a high stick.

Ingles recalls a different order.

"I think it was right before he went on spring break with this team," Ingles said. "A month earlier, he cut my lip. He was dumping in the puck on the power play, and the stick came up and cut my lip open. I wasn't too happy about that. Obviously, he didn't do it on purpose."

"And then later on in the season, my stick got lifted, and it went right into his teeth. He chipped his teeth, and that was like our last game of the year against each other. We were obviously committed to the same school. We texted a little bit afterward that now we could be friends since we weren't playing against each other anymore, and we were like, 'Hey, let's make amends and let's be chill about it.' We both apologized to each other and said we're all good. It's kind of a funny story," he said.

"If I remember correctly, he hit me first, but I don't really know. I remember him going on spring break right after, and he wasn't very happy about going there with two or three chipped teeth. It wasn't good timing, but after the last game, we texted each other and said, 'Let's be buddies now and figure it all out.' So, it's all good."

Ingles said it's no surprise he and Gunderson have become friends once they arrived in Columbus.

"I think when you're out on the ice sheet, you don't really have any friends out there. But then when you come off the ice, you can be friends with whoever," he said. "Playing against Gundy, obviously, we were rivals all last year. We just met last year, and playing on the ice, we weren't friends."

"But as soon as you come to a new team and a new culture and you're meeting a bunch of new guys, you meet him and you're more similar than you think and now you have a common denominator. You're playing for the same team, and you're all defending

each other. You're on the same team."

Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik knows the feeling. Growing up in St. Paul, Minn., he had a rival team in White Bear Lake.

"I played against this guy my whole life. His name was John Parker. We played against them all the time. They were really good. We were good, but we always had to compete."

"Well, we both went to Wisconsin. The roommate list comes out. Who's my roommate freshman year? John Parker – the guys that butted heads our whole life. I end up being in his wedding. He was in my wedding."

In The House

Former Ohio State goalie Jakub Dobeš made his first appearance in Nationwide Arena on Nov. 17 since being called up to the Montreal Canadiens in December 2024.

He made 20 saves in a 4-3 overtime loss to the Columbus Blue Jackets, with many members of the current Buckeye team in attendance.

Dobeš played for the Buckeyes from 2021-23 and in 2022 was the Big Ten Goal-tender of the Year and co-Freshman of the Year as well as first-team All-Big Ten.

He got off to a historic start this season but has cooled off a bit. Dobeš is the first goalie in the NHL to start two rookie seasons 5-0-0. He played only 16 games in the NHL in 2024-25 and is still considered a first-year player.

Through Nov. 21, he was 6-2-2 with a 2.96 goals-against average and a .892 save percentage. For his NHL career, he was 13-6-5, 2.83, .903 with one shutout in the regular season and 1-2, 2.91, .881 in the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Ohio State junior goalie Kristoffer Eberly arrived the season after Dobeš signed with Montreal following his sophomore season but has tracked his career and was at Nationwide Arena.

"It was really cool to see him play and awesome to see an old Buckeye doing so well playing in the NHL," Eberly said. "I hope he keeps killing it."

"He's someone I look up to, and I'd love to take the route he has taken, so it's definitely motivation."

First Impression

Ex-Buckeye forward Stephen Halliday (2022-24) had an assist in his NHL debut for the Ottawa Senators on Nov. 20.

He was an honorable-mention All-Big Ten in 2023 and 2024 and the team MVP in 2024. He had 77 points (19 goals, 58 assists) in 78 career games.

Halliday was recalled from Belleville of the American Hockey League on Nov. 18 and quickly earned the trust of the Ottawa staff.

He was on the power-play unit when he set up Shane Pinto to make it 2-2 with 58 seconds left in the second period.

"Obviously, a really skilled, high-hockey IQ player," Senators forward Drake Batherson said of Halliday. "He makes that play through the seam, saucer pass right on the tape. Impressive stuff."

Batherson broke the tie with 1:58 remaining in the third period for the win.

Up There

The Buckeyes headed to Ann Arbor to play No. 2 Michigan on Nov. 21 and 22 for the first series of the season between the schools.

Despite the changing landscape with the transfer portal and the new rule this season allowing players from the major Canadian junior leagues, Rohlik said there is still something special when the Buckeyes and Wolverines play.

"At the end of the day, I think we realize what tradition is. We realize what the rivalry is," Rohlik said. "We realize what they are. So I don't think that's ever going away, but you don't have maybe eight guys that have been here for us for four years, eight guys for four years for them. You kind of see that coming and going a little bit, but I'm pretty sure that every guy who puts on that jersey this weekend is going to understand that."

Michigan natives Ingles, Eberly (Pinckney) and freshman goalie Sam Hillebrandt (St. Clair) will have cheering sections in Yost Arena for the games.

"I have a lot of family coming down," Ingles said. "It was kind of hard to get tickets because, obviously, it's a rivalry game, and it's hard to get tickets. It's going to be a packed rink."

"I play for the Buckeyes. So, as cool as it is to play in Michigan, I'm a Buckeye and I want to beat Michigan."

Swept Away

The Buckeyes (5-7-0, 1-5-0 Big Ten) hung with Michigan the first two periods of the series, but the Wolverines (13-3-3, 6-2-0) were too much to handle the rest of the way in taking 5-2 and 8-1 victories.

OSU was tied 2-2 heading into the third period of the opener at Yost Arena before U-M scored three times, including an empty-netter, in the final nine minutes. Felix Caron and Jake Dunlap scored for the Buckeyes.

Michigan continued the onslaught the next night, leading 3-0 after the first period and 5-0 through 40 minutes. The lone OSU goal came with 47 seconds left in the game by Thomas Weis on the power play.

Next

The Buckeyes play at Arizona State on Nov. 28 (5 p.m.) and 29 (7 p.m.) before returning to Value City Arena for the final games of 2025 vs. Minnesota at 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 4 and 6 p.m. on Dec. 5. Both games against the Golden Gophers will be on the Big Ten Network.

For a complete recap of the Michigan series go to the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



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Buckeyes Rank No. 2 After Invitational Title

Ohio State has passed all of its early-season tests with flying colors, dominating the Clarion Open with six wrestlers leaving as champions out of 10 weight classes and posting a 42-4 thrashing of Chattanooga in the Buckeyes' first dual on Nov. 9

ON THE MAT Sam Cipriani

Then, Ohio State faced its toughest challenge at the 2025 National Duals Invitational, where it matched up against and took down No. 29 Wyoming, No. 10 Minnesota, No. 2 Nebraska and No. 3 Iowa in consecutive duals to claim the title.

According to InterMat rankings, nearly every Buckeye starter made major jumps in their respective weight classes after key victories at the invitational, while Ohio State itself jumped from No. 6 to No. 2 in the dual standings, trailing only Penn State, which has won four straight national championships.

At 125 pounds, redshirt-junior Nic Bouzakis went from unranked to No. 3 nationally after defeating No. 8 Jore Volk of Minnesota and No. 10 Dean Peterson of Iowa, while previously ranked (No. 16) Brendan McCrone fell out of the top 30 since InterMat ranks only one wrestler per program at each weight class.

At 133 pounds, Ben Davino is now the Buckeyes' second-highest ranked wrestler in his respective weight class, jumping from No. 9 to second nationally after defeating No. 3 Drake Ayala of Iowa.

Jesse Mendez remained at No. 1 at 141 pounds after successfully defending his top ranking against No. 2 Brock Hardy of Nebraska.

At 149 pounds, Ethan Stiles climbed

one spot to eighth, while 157-pound wrestler Brandon Cannon, now No. 5, earned arguably the biggest win of the tournament with a 16-4 major decision over Nebraska's No. 1-ranked Antrell Taylor, the 2025 NCAA champion in the weight class.

Paddy Gallagher moved up two positions to No. 10 at 165 pounds, and Carson Kharchla jumped from No. 9 to No. 5 at 174 pounds after defeating previously fourth-ranked Christopher Minto of Nebraska.

At 184 pounds, Dylan Fishback ascended from No. 7 to No. 6, while in the heavyweight division, Nick Feldman rose three spots to No. 3 after defeating No. 2-ranked AJ Ferrari of Nebraska. Ferrari's younger brother, Angelo, is the No. 1-ranked wrestler at 184 pounds for Iowa and was Fishback's only loss at duals.

No. 14 Luke Geog at 197 pounds is the only Ohio State starter ranked outside the top 10 at their respective weight class. He fell one spot from No. 13.

The Buckeyes then followed up their performance at duals with a 44-0 sweep of Kent State (1-2) on Nov. 20 at the Covelli Center, where seven Ohio State wrestlers earned extra points in their victories.

Competition Heats Up

Ohio State redshirt-juniors McCrone (8-0) and Bouzakis (5-1) have been dominant in the early stretch of the season, leaving head coach Tom Ryan with a tough decision to make as the season progresses.

Neither 125-pounder has lost to an opponent outside of their head-to-head meeting, with Bouzakis' lone setback coming in

a 5-4 decision to McCrone in the Clarion Open final.

Ryan did rotate McCrone and Bouzakis during the 2025 National Duals Invitational, where both 125-pounders won both of their matches, but it was Bouzakis who stole the show, defeating the former 10th- and eighth-ranked wrestlers by sudden victory decision and pin, respectively.

Davino, who often trains with Bouzakis and McCrone with no other wrestlers in the 133-pound division, said that the pair's contrasting strengths make them a uniquely challenging duo to prepare for.

"Bouzakis is just super strong and super explosive," Davino said. "So at 125, that's a big advantage, just being stronger than all your opponents and being able to explode through them. That's super effective and has been effective for Nic so far throughout this year. I mean, McCrone is super hard to score on. You'll get on his legs, and that's just one-fifth of the battle. He creates a lot of problems offensively for other wrestlers, which is a super good attribute."

Davino Thriving At 133 Pounds

After a true freshman campaign where he finished 19-1 overall (14-1 with the Buckeyes, 5-0 unattached), Davino was lauded by his Buckeye teammates and coaches in the offseason.

Mendez, a two-time 141-pound NCAA champion, called the 133-pounder a "killer," stating that he had a "national champion's mindset," while McCrone said Davino was "next up (at Ohio State)."

After redshirting his first year with Ohio State, Davino has quickly made his way into the starting rotation in 2025.

After five straight wins at the 2025 Clarion Open and a win over Ethan Lipsey in the Buckeyes' duel against Chattanooga, Davino dominated at the National Duals Invitational.

Davino earned extra points in three out of four matches, and in his biggest bout of the season, the redshirt freshman showed up for Ohio State. Davino beat Iowa's No. 3-ranked Ayala, defeating the former two-time national finalist 10-4 by decision.

Though Davino (11-0) has had a perfect start to the season, he said, with his mindset and with the help of Mendez as a training partner in practice, he is just getting started.

"I have not peaked as a wrestler, so that's something that we're going to find out in March," Davino said. "I can't sit back and be content with that win (against Ayala), because he's going to get better, and I have to get better as well. I mean, I just have the constant motivation to get better in the practice room and with Jesse (Mendez as a partner), he's going to put that much more motivation to get better. I'm just working to consistently develop and improve my game."

Following his four victories during

the National Duals Invitational, Davino was named USA Wrestling Athlete of the Week and also earned Big Ten Freshman of the Week honors for the second time. He previously earned the distinction after The Clarion Open on Nov. 7, 2024, where Davino won five matches and a title in his first-ever collegiate outing.

He expressed his appreciation to the Ohio State coaching staff for helping him get to where he wants to be, while adding that he feels he's the best 133-pound wrestler in the nation.

"I truly do believe that the coaches behind me have put everything they have into me, and that caused me to get to where I am right now, and I'm only going to improve with their help," Davino said. "I definitely think that I'm the best 133-pound wrestler in the country."

Bonus Points A Weapon

Ohio State hasn't just been winning its matches. It's been doing so in commanding fashion. Of its 59 total bouts in duals (Iowa forfeited against heavyweight Feldman), the Buckeyes have earned extra points (win by pin, technical fall or major decision) in 28 of those matches and haven't had fewer than three wins of that nature in a dual this season.

Bonus points even allowed Ohio State to earn its Invitational championship early against Iowa. The Buckeyes won their first five matches vs. the Hawkeyes and earned major decisions in three of those, as Ohio State jumped out to a 21-0 lead.

Bouzakis earned a fall at 125 pounds (six team points), Mendez defeated No. 9 Nasir Bailey by tech fall 17-1 at 141 pounds (five), and Cannon beat Victor Voinovich with a 14-2 major decision at 155 (four).

Iowa claimed the next four bouts by decision, but Ohio State's six bonus points made a Hawkeye comeback mathematically impossible, leading Iowa to forfeit and seal the championship 27-12 for the Buckeyes.

Davino, who has earned extra points in eight out of 11 matches this season, said he understands the importance of winning his bouts early and decisively.

"I know that the team needs me to get those extra points in case things get tough towards the end," Davino said. "That helped me kind of just push through the fatigue and go rattle off some offense."

What's Next

Ohio State (6-0) has been dominant in the early slate of the season, though it will remain dormant for 13 days following its victory over Kent State on Nov. 20.

The Buckeyes will not be on the mat before BSB next goes to press. Following their nearly two-week-long break, Ohio State will face off against Bellarmine (1-1) at 7 p.m. on Dec. 3 at the Covelli Center. The match will be available for streaming on B1G-Plus.

Bellarmine is coming off a 40-0 sweep at the hands of No. 3 Iowa in its first dual of the season, before the Knights defeated Northern Illinois, 23-13 at Knights Hall in Louisville, Ky., on Nov. 21.



Brendan McCrone



Nic Bouzakis



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OSU Can't Make Same Mistakes Against U-M

We know the main reason why Buckeye fans are nervous.

If you could throw the Michigan game off the schedule, Ohio State would have won 52 of their last 53 regular-season games, heading into the annual Michigan game. Yet, Michigan each of the last four years has spoiled the Buckeyes' Big Ten title hopes.

EXNER POINT Rich Exner

This season has looked so different, more complete and more consistent than for other recent OSU teams. The Buckeyes have been a machine, dispensing opponent after opponent in easy fashion, not even a threat of losing other than for a few minutes toward the end of the season opener against Texas. Offense. Defense. Kicking. All phases have clicked.

And the 11th victory looked so easy on the scoreboard, again – a 42-9 win over Rutgers.

There, of course, is the lingering concern about the dynamic receiving duo of Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate, who sat out the Rutgers game with unexplained injuries. Ryan Day has not been forthcoming about their injuries, so who really knows if they will be back against Michigan and in what form?

But setting that aside, anyone who watched the Rutgers game knows other concerns were raised.

The Buckeyes overcame big mistake after big mistake in a way that's much easier to do against Rutgers than it will be against Michigan or, more so, against a high-quality playoff opponent.

I counted at least six of special concern:

- Bo Jackson fumbled near the goal line on the first drive. Result: no points after an 11-play, 73-yard drive.
- The Buckeyes stopped Rutgers on a fourth down near midfield early in the second quarter, but an interference penalty by Jermaine Mathews Jr. kept the drive alive. Eventually, Rutgers kicked a field goal on this drive to draw within 7-3.
- Davison Igbinosun intercepted a Rutgers pass late in the second quarter, but the interception was nullified because of a personal foul call on Eddrick Houston for hands to the face. Although the OSU defense stopped Rutgers four plays later, this cost OSU field position and time.
- Day failed to call a timeout after a sack by Houston and Styles that put Rutgers in a fourth-and-9 with 1:04 left in the half. Instead, the clock wound down to 35 seconds before OSU called a timeout. This meant that by the time OSU took possession after a punt, only 28 seconds remained in the half, eliminating any thought of trying to score from 82 yards away.
- With a second-and-goal at the 1-yard line midway through the third quarter, Ethan Onianwa was called for holding, pushing the Buckeyes back 10 yards. OSU still scored a touchdown, but a play like that could prove



SONNY BROCKWAY

HIS CALL - Coach Ryan Day was criticized for the run-first (second and third) game plan last season against Michigan, and anything remotely close to that on Nov. 29 could deny the Buckeyes a chance to go to the Big Ten Championship Game.

detrimental down the road.

• And it looked for a moment like a scoring opportunity from the 1-yard line was going to be lost when Phillip Daniels was called for unsportsmanlike conduct. (It was a tough call as Daniels was continuing a block.) That penalty would have pushed the Buckeyes back to the 16. But, fortunately for OSU, the replay review showed Donaldson had scored. So the dead-ball penalty was instead assessed on the kickoff.

These are the types of things that should be concerning as playoff time approaches. Such mistakes were not a big issue during the first 10 games, but so many mistakes in the 11th game of the year? That needs to be cleaned up quickly.

Pass Game Concern

OSU has a great collection of tight ends this season, but the wide receivers need to be part of the game, with or without Tate and Smith.

Julian Sayin and Lincoln Kienholz threw 22 passes against Rutgers. Wideouts were targeted only eight times (Brandon Inniss, 4; David Adolph, 3; and Mylan Graham, 1), and they accounted for only four receptions (2 each by Inniss and Adolph).

That's not using the field. And that's not using open wideouts when they do break free downfield.

Pass Game Plus

Sayin, of course, has been spectacular throughout the season. But should he go down, Buckeye fans should have reasonable confidence in Kienholz.

He's clearly not the same guy who was thrown into the fire unexpectedly against Missouri in the Cotton Bowl two years ago.

Though limited in his playing time this year, Kienholz has played with competency each time he's been given a chance.

I'm not a fan of subbing Kienholz in mid-drive like Day did against Rutgers. But maybe that was just to give him some experience, or to give Michigan something they'll have to waste practice time preparing for. But Kienholz certainly did look

comfortable when on the field.

Tough Break For Curry

Count me as one who thought defensive end Caden Curry should have been credited with a sack, forced fumble, fumble recovery and a touchdown on the same play midway through the third quarter.

The replay looked as if Curry had the ball over the goal line. But as quick as the ball was put in play for the OSU offense, I'm not sure a replay official really took a close look. And the official on the field did not have a good angle to see. He was a few yards upfield.

But what a game Curry had in what has been a solid season. His two sacks and six tackles upped his season totals to nine sacks and 49 tackles, tops among all Buckeye linemen.

In fact, even among all defenders, only linebackers Sonny Styles (62) and Arvell Reese (59) have more tackles. Safety Caleb Downs also has 49 tackles.

Closest to Curry in sacks are Reese (6½) and Kenyatta Jackson Jr. (4½).

Playoff Bye On The Line Vs. U-M

In this new world of college football that we're still getting used to with expanded conferences and expanded playoffs, an oddity could be about to occur.

Should Ohio State and Indiana, as two unbeaten teams, play for the Big Ten title, it really won't mean anything for what re-

ally matters – the playoffs and the national championship.

They would both be virtually guaranteed first-round byes in the playoffs ahead of the league title game. Finishing 12-1 would be good enough for that.

Look at the other potential one-loss or undefeated teams for byes.

Oregon is not going to jump ahead of one of these. In fact, Oregon has a loss to Indiana on its résumé.

Texas Tech is not going to make the jump ahead of both Ohio State and Indiana by winning the mediocre Big 12, and with an Arizona State loss on its résumé.

And there is no way the committee will give three SEC teams first-round byes. Currently, Texas A&M, Georgia and Ole Miss are those with one or no losses.

This presumes the Big Ten title game isn't a total blowout.

The Top 10

Here's how I see the top 10 this week.

1. Ohio State (11-0) – Clearly the best all season.
2. Indiana (11-0) – Some people west of Columbus, I'm sure, see this as too low for the Hoosiers, but this will be settled before the final playoff rankings and seedings.
3. Texas A&M (11-0) – Gotta like Texas A&M's most recent win, 48-0 over Samford. Not.
4. Georgia (10-1) – Gotta like Georgia's most recent win, 35-3 over Charlotte. Not. But this still is the team after Ohio State that I most wouldn't want to face in the playoffs.
5. Ole Miss (10-1) – Only loss is to Georgia.
6. Oregon (10-1) – I believe Oregon would have won any conference this year other than the Big Ten and the SEC.
7. Oklahoma (9-2) – America's best two-loss team with wins over Alabama, Tennessee and Michigan, but losses to Texas and Ole Miss.
8. Notre Dame (9-2) – Winners of nine straight after opening with losses against Miami and Texas A&M.
9. Alabama (9-2) – Gotta like Alabama's most recent win, 56-0 over Eastern Illinois. Not. This is typical, ridiculous late-season scheduling in the SEC.
10. Texas Tech (10-1) – I give and am willing to include Texas Tech in the top 10, barely. Just unimpressed in looking over its schedule. But, like with OSU, I guess you can't hold the weakness of the opponents against them.



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Now's The Time To Buck Michigan Trend

I know some of you are tired of listening to me ramble on about the Michigan game, Ohio State's losing streak and, most importantly, last year's embarrassing loss to That Team Up North. Rather than annoying you myself, I am going to turn things over to former Buckeye player and coach Rudy Hubbard, who captured my thoughts and feelings virtually word for word in his Michigan Memory on page 18 of this issue.

"I couldn't believe what happened," Hubbard said of last year's upset. "First of all, you couldn't have told me that we were going to lose that game going into it. I just wouldn't have believed it. Nobody could have convinced me of that. I felt really good about the team that we had, and I didn't feel like Michigan had a good team.

"I knew they had really outstanding defensive tackles, but with the receivers that we had, I never thought we would be so run-heavy. I was in shock that game. That one hurt. Because of all those games, I felt like we had them right where we needed to have them. I wouldn't have thought in a million years that we would lose that game. The few years before, Michigan kind of deserved it (to win). They just beat us. But that game, we should have won."

Like me, Hubbard was appeased when the Buckeyes went on to win the national championship.

"I just want us to win," he said. "I mean, I don't want to lose to Michigan anytime, but I'm OK after having lost to Michigan, to turn around and win a national championship. All of that's good to me."

One Of My Favorites

The Michigan Memories issue of BSB is one of my favorite issues, along with the July Interview Issue, of each year.

Each year we gather a diverse group of former Ohio State players and sometimes others affiliated with the program and even former Michigan players to hear their memories of The Game. We have spoken to dozens of subjects through the years, dating back to the likes of Heisman Trophy Winner Les Horvath (interviewed in 1994). In fact, we have interviewed so many players about their memories that it becomes a little more difficult each year to find Buckeyes we haven't already interviewed. Still, for this issue, we have once again put together a diverse group of subjects.

With the epic changes in college football over the last few years, it was inevitable that the nature of the rivalry between the Buckeyes and Wolverines would change. It is still probably the greatest rivalry in sports, but nothing like it was, say, during the Ten-Year War, led by legendary coaches Woody Hayes and Bo Schembechler. I think it is important, through these Michigan Memories, to keep the tales of the great Ohio State-Michigan games, players and coaches alive so that we understand how the rivalry got to where it is today, even if it is slightly watered down now.

There is no question that Woody Hayes was a big part of creating the intensity of the rivalry. If you have read many Memories through the years, that is apparent.

Former Ohio State receiver Doug Donley (1977-1980) says in his Michigan Memory in this issue that it was an eye-opener his freshman season of 1977, watching his coach work himself into a frenzy obsessing over Michigan.

"Woody was in that locker room up there (in Ann Arbor) getting us pumped up and screaming and hollering, and he punched his fist right through the blackboard and said, 'We're going to come out fighting and we're going to beat them,' and he started banging his head into a locker."

It's hard to imagine Ryan Day banging his head against a locker to fire the team up.

On the other hand, the softer side of Hayes, the side we don't hear about as much, came out during Michigan games, according to Super

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

Soph running back Leo Hayden. Hayden finished his Senior Day against Michigan in 1970 with 28 carries for 117 yards and one rushing touchdown.

As the clock ticked down in the Buckeyes' 20-9 victory, Hayes removed Hayden from the game so that he could receive recognition from the Buckeye faithful.

Hayden says in his Michigan Memory that the move by Hayes was one of the most meaningful gestures he had ever received from his head coach.

"The thing that was the most profound was the way Coach Hayes showed his appreciation for my output. He brought me out of the game early," Hayden said. "He let me come off the field, and the crowd was cheering and folks were saying they hadn't seen running like that in a long time. I feel like, truly, the coach valued me as a football player at the Ohio State University, and he valued my output against Michigan. I've never seen him bring anybody off the field early before, other than Jim Otis when he scored four touchdowns (against Michigan) in 1968."

Hayden continued, believing that Hayes honoring him by taking him out of the game early for the crowd to celebrate him was the memory he cherishes most during his time at Ohio State.

"To this day, if somebody said, 'Well, what was your crowning achievement?' " Hayden said, "(it is) being able to contribute to the 1970 win over Michigan and being acknowledged by Coach Hayes, that I had really contributed to this process and that he was proud of that. It's so rare to ever see him bring people out of the game early so that they could be acknowledged by the crowd."

Frequently, when a Buckeye passes away during a particular year and we have done a Michigan Memory on that person, we reprint that Memory. Such was supposed to be the case for Buckeye running back Bob White (1957-59) before we unfortunately ran out of space. White was also moved by Hayes' action in a Michigan week.

White was injured much of his senior season of 1959 but played through it as best he could. However, he was a no-go for the Michigan game, the only one in three years that he missed due to injury. White said he will never forget what Hayes did for him as the team traveled to Ann Arbor for the game.

"Woody kept me on the traveling squad even though I didn't dress for the game," White said. "I appreciated that, I really did. I thought it was one of the great acts of kindness a man ever did."

We will try to get the Michigan Memories of White and former Buckeye quarterback Jim Karsatos, who also passed away in 2025, reprinted on our BuckeyeSports.com website.

Will History Repeat Itself?

Pardon me if, after four straight losses, I am a little nervous about this year's Ohio State-Michigan game. Do I think Ohio State has the better team? Yes, but I believed that last year. What happened to that old saying, "I don't care if one team is 0-11 and the other is 11-0. Anyone can win the Ohio State-Michigan game."

Ryan Day's strategy this year has apparently been to try not to make too big a deal about The Game. Does anybody besides me recall that was John Cooper's initial strategy when he came to Columbus? Treat The Game as just another big game. That's a fine strategy, but not necessarily if your opponent is treating it like it is part of the Ten-Year War. Cooper ended up going seven years before he scored his first victory over the Wolverines.

I don't know if this counts as treating the game

differently, but Michigan has apparently been preparing for the game for some time now.

"You can't prepare for The Game the week of The Game," Wolverine coach Sherrone Moore said. "It's got to happen in January. It's got to happen in February. It's got to happen in March and in the summer. If you try to shift the way you prepare that week, then it's too late. We've been doing this for a while, but now we get to focus in from a game plan standpoint."

Of course, who am I to question championship coach Ryan Day? I'm sure he has been planning for this game just as long as Moore and Michigan have. He and his staff do seem to have a plan in place. Get better every week, build chemistry and peak in time for the big games at the end of the season, with Michigan at the top of the list. It seems to be a lower key, more professional approach than the days of banners in the locker room and the Michigan fight song blaring perpetually.

"This week has to be the best," Day said of where his team needs to be. "We've been working towards this all year. We know that the opponent is different. We know what's at stake. We know we're playing for hardware now, but at the end of the day, it's still about us. We can't all of a sudden change things."

Agreed.

But stick to that plan. Take another step forward the week of The Game. Ohio State has a history of changing things when it gets to Michigan week. It happened last year, and it happened all the way back to the days of Hayes.

"I know it's intense now, but I don't know how it could be more intense than it was with Woody because of his hatred for Michigan," Donley said. "Woody, just the whole week of that Michigan week was just so tense. Everybody was on pins and needles. And Woody just wanted that game so bad that the practice was just very tense all week long."

Donley felt that tightness was detrimental.

"I do, 100 percent," he said.

But here's Donley's key point.

"And then, we never really used the weapons that we had. Woody pounded it out. Even Ohio State now with all the weapons, Ryan Day has tried to prove that he can run the ball vs. use all the weapons that they have.

"I don't know what it is about the Michigan game that you want to prove that you can beat them by running against them and out-toughing them up front."

Ohio State needs to stay and play cool, calm and collected. Play the way they have all season. The defense will be just fine. There is talent at every position, and defensive coordinator Matt Patricia will devise an NFL-style game plan to bewilder freshman quarterback Bryce Underwood.

It's the offense I worry about.

Use all the tools in the toolbox as you have all season, or at least up until the last game or two anyway, especially if Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate are available. Don't make the assumption that because Ohio State has racked up plenty of rushing offense in the last couple of games against teams at the bottom of the rush-defense rankings that it will be the same against a Michigan rush defense that is ranked 11th in the country, giving up 94.0 yards per game.

You've got a Heisman Trophy candidate for a quarterback with outstanding receivers, even without Smith and Tate (and I feel like they are going to play).

Let's play to win!

They Don't Know Any Better

You may recall that in the last issue of BSB we asked several experts about the state of the Ohio State-Michigan rivalry. Pat Murphy of 247Sports suggested that the fact Ohio State had a major overhaul from its 2024 championship roster, with many veterans moving on to the NFL and elsewhere, might work in Ohio State's favor in the game this year.

"I think there's something to the fact that they haven't gone through it over and over again," Murphy said of the young stars on this year's team. "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."

The Rutgers Game

For all the clunkiness in the game with Rutgers, the score ended up about what would have been expected in the 42-9 Ohio State victory.

You know how you always hear from coaches and players the week before the Michigan game – or any big game for that matter – that the team is not looking ahead and is taking them one game at a time, etc. I'm not suggesting that Ohio State was looking past Rutgers, but I *am* suggesting that the Buckeyes were not as sharp against the Scarlet Knights as they have been in most other games this season. It's a long season, and these are young guys, not grizzled professionals.

I'll give them one slipup, but they better snap back in a hurry.

My biggest take out of the game with Rutgers was that punter Joe McGuire finally had an impact play, burying the Scarlet Knights at their own 1 early in the third quarter. I'm not suggesting that McGuire has been bad this season, but he hasn't been dominating. McGuire is averaging 42.0 yards per punt with seven of his 19 boots inside the 20.

Now is the time, Joe.

Three-For-One Great Deal

I'm not going to suggest you upgrade to first-class mail in an envelope through the Michigan game this issue, because that ship has already sailed, though you can still upgrade through the playoffs and the Football Recruiting Wrap-up for \$20. Don't say I didn't warn you about Thanksgiving and Michigan delivery.

I did want to remind you about our Holiday Three-For-One special, one of our most popular promotions of the year. Many of you reading this column have signed up, or had someone subscribe you, through this money-saving promotion. Buy a subscription at the regular price and give two gift subscriptions absolutely free.

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