

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 45, No. 12

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Dec. 6, 2025

OSU Breaks Four-Game Losing Streak To U-M With 27-9 Victory

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

With a 27-9 win over Michigan in Ann Arbor on Nov. 29, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day finally exorcised his Wolverine demons and ended the four-game losing streak his team had suffered dating back to 2021.

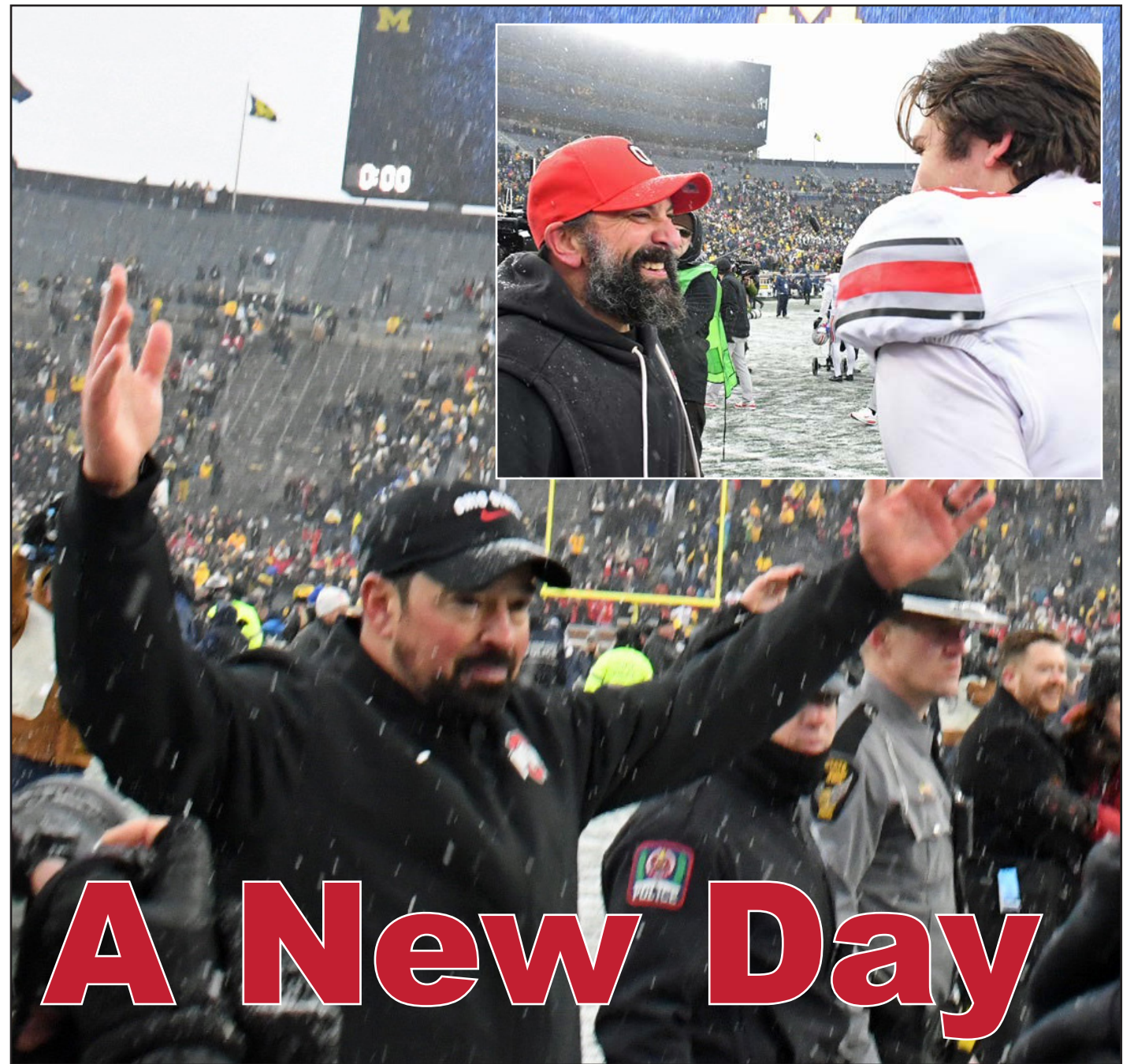
It was easy to see how much it meant to him after the game.

It was obvious when first-year defensive coordinator Matt Patricia wrapped up the head coach in a tight hug immediately postgame, yelling, "I told you, I didn't come here to lose. No way!" while Day had a beaming smile spread across his face.

He was trying to be more stoic in his postgame press conference than he was on the field with his coaches and players, but that smile couldn't be wiped off his face when he was asked how it felt to finally break the streak of losing to the Wolverines.

After Michigan planted a flag on Ohio State's field immediately following the 2024 rivalry game, Day said he wanted to make sure he handled himself well in the press conference. After this year's win, he made **no baseball-related comments** about any opposing coach like former Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh did in 2021 when he said, "Sometimes people that are standing on third base think they hit a triple, but they didn't. He also made sure that his team didn't plant an OSU flag on the Block "M" at midfield, though he admitted he had thought for years about what he would say when he finally pulled it off.

"I've thought, as you can imagine, over the years, after winning this game, what I'd say in this press conference, and I'm going to save all those comments, because I think the best thing to do is win with hu-



A New Day

SONNY BROCKWAY

O-H, WHAT A FEELING — The 27-9 victory over Michigan, in Ann Arbor no less, to end a four-game losing streak in The Game brought out the emotions of the Ohio State players and coaches. First-year defensive coordinator Matt Patricia (inset) is all smiles greeting quarterback Julian Sayin after the dominant win, and head coach Ryan Day celebrated on the Michigan Stadium field after his second win in six tries vs. the Wolverines.

mility, and that's what we're going to do," Day said. "I think that it speaks to our program. It speaks to what it means to be a Buckeye."

Even without a flag-planting — also due to the fact that Michigan players surrounded the midfield logo after they lost to stop any would-be planters — Ohio State still celebrated the win in the locker room, loudly yelling through the single tunnel to get there after the Wolverines had already sulked their way into the home locker room.

Day said that it will go down as one of his favorite memories as a head coach.

"It was, as you can imagine, a great memory of mine just being in there with those guys and enjoying the win and seeing them smile and knowing what they just did on the field," Day said. "I'll leave

what we said in the locker room.

"I was just happy for our guys, just to see the smiles on their faces and see the sense of accomplishment, the fact that we were going to play in this game really hard, for the love of our brother, not for the hatred of our opponent."

The players who have been trying, and failing, to beat Michigan for their entire careers also felt somewhat of a weight off their shoulders with the win.

Senior linebacker Sonny Styles talked about how he knew it was his last chance to beat the Wolverines and how much

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From The Message Board

Ryan Day has finally ended his losing streak against Michigan with a 27-9 victory over the Wolverines. We asked subscribers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum what their thoughts are on how the game went and how Day handled the week of The Game. We also asked if their thoughts on Day had changed at all now that he has proved he can beat U-M.

"Ryan Day is a great football coach, and his track record has proven that. He is a great person that cares about his family, players, staff, and community. We are lucky to have him as THE Coach at THE Ohio State University."

— BuckeyeScott

"I think his record was .889 before the Mich game, and it may be .900 now. I, personally, wouldn't trade him for any other coach in college football."

— Terrier Buck

"TTUN week has to speed up Day's aging process by 10. He seemed to handle the week and The Game with grace and style. Very impressive. A class act."

— PeyoteBuck

"Greatest Ohio State coach in my lifetime. I will always have his back as a fan. The stuff that he went through is sickening and disgusting when it comes to Michigan, especially when all he's ever done is win 90 percent of his games. If anybody has any more doubts about him now, then go argue with a wall."

— Tiffin Buckeye

"The game was total domination (except for the first five minutes). Over 40 minutes time of possession."

If ever there was an 'I told you so' coming to the sports media, this was it. Day, however, chose to handle the victory in humility. The man has more class in his little finger than the whole staff of TTUN."

— R1TBDBITL

"Day had big shoes to fill following Urban Meyer. Lou Holtz once said that he didn't want to follow Woody Hayes. He wanted to follow the man that followed Woody Hayes. That's an easier road. Day, however, accepted the challenge offered and has not disappointed. He is also learning to delegate responsibility, work the portal, NIL, CFP, etc., and is doing a great job. Great job from the start."

— John Lanning

"I feel the same way about Ryan Day as I did after last year's fluke loss to Michigan. An outstanding coach, a great human being, and an inspiration to his players, coaches, and all Buckeye fans."

"The minor changes he made heading into The Game obviously worked, and certainly did not reflect panic, as some media talking heads had incorrectly intimated. I hope he stays in Columbus for a long, long time!"

— Bob Cody

FAN FORUM

Buckeye Leaves

Ohio State ended its four-game losing streak to Michigan with a 27-9 victory at Michigan Stadium on Nov. 29. 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 a dominant all-around offensive performance in Ohio State's win over Michigan, I'm giving my Buckeye Leaf to freshman running back Bo Jackson. The rookie back was a force both on the ground and through the air against the Wolverines.

Jackson led the Buckeyes with 22 rushes for 117 yards for an average of 5.3 yards per carry and added four catches for 49 yards, which was second on the team. Jackson finished with three carries of more than 13 yards, including a 36-yard tote in the first quarter. It marked Jackson's third straight game crossing the century mark and was the sixth time this season he surpassed 100 yards.

Bobby Gorbett, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf is going to team captain and starting linebacker Sonny Styles. In Ohio State's win over Michigan, Styles led the Buckeyes in total tackles with six and had one of just three tackles for loss for the team.

Styles' TFL came in the third quarter when Ohio State was leading 24-9. Styles wrapped up Michigan running back Jordan Marshall 2 yards behind the line of scrimmage to bring up a third-and-12. The Wolverines had an incomplete pass and had to punt on the next play.

It was the first win over Michigan in Styles' career.

Greg Wilson, BSB: The losing streak started with C.J. Stroud at quarterback. Kyle McCord couldn't end it. Will Howard couldn't end it. But redshirt-freshman Julian Sayin was the one who ultimately put Ohio State back on top in the rivalry.

It seemed early on that he might have been affected by the Michigan mental block when he threw an interception on the second offensive snap of the game in Ohio State territory, which led to the Wolverines taking a 6-0 lead. But after that, Sayin was 19 of 24 the rest of the way.

He finished the game 19 of 26 passing for 233 yards, three touchdowns and one interception.

Frank Moskowitz, BSB: Ryan Day.

BSB Subscribers

BuckeyeScott: I'm giving my Buckeye leaf to Brutus Buckeye for his artwork in scratching "OHIO" in the snow on the turf and also scratching the big X on the Michigan "M" in the end zone. One of the best plays of the day!

Terrier Buck: I don't usually do Buckeye Leaves, but I thought the entire coaching staff did a good job game planning during the week and during the game. Especially kept poise and confidence, etc.

John Lanning: This game had all the flashbacks of the recent games in the first five minutes. Once everyone settled down, it became business as usual ... control the game and the clock. With that in mind, gold pants, Buckeyes leaves, and congratulations to team and staff for the regular season. Now on to the hardware season.

Tiffin Buckeye: Ryan Day – my man was always criticized over Michigan games. I always stood with him. He's an amazing coach who I hope stays at Ohio State until he retires.

Luckeeman: Matt Patricia as the architect of the Buckeye defense that only allowed 163 total yards, no TDs, and negative 8 yards rushing in the second half. The Ann Arbor team's offense was totally stymied!

gold_pants: Begins and ends with OL – 67, 51, 75, 77 and 70. Absolutely dominated both the pass and run game after being much maligned for the last few weeks.

Bob Cody: A trove of Buckeye Leaves earned in a big team effort in Ann Arbor! After overcoming early adversity, the Buckeyes righted the ship and cruised to victory in the second half.

Leaves for the entire team, Ryan Day, Matt Patricia and the entire coaching and support staff. Special Leaves for Julian Sayin, Carnell Tate, Jeremiah Smith, Bo Jackson and Brandon Inniss. All members of both trenches – offense and defense – they did their jobs protecting Julian, opening holes for the RBs, stifling Michigan's run game and making Bryce Underwood average.

Sonny Styles, Davison Igbinosun for the INT, in spite of two penalties. Redemptive Leaves for Jayden Fielding, who hit everything he was asked to do, after having a bad injury-plagued game in last year's head-scratching loss.

PeyoteBuck: I give a leaf to Brutus for Xing out the M. And to Matt Patricia. Just like former Columbus mayor Tom Moody, Patricia is "quietly effective." Give workhorse Bo Jackson a big leaf and all the Buckeye Fans who braved the Big House cooties on a chilly day.

R1TBDBITL: My leaf goes to the entire coaching staff. A team doesn't retain this degree of focus without a great one.

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

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

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

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2025-26 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (VOL. 45)

No. 1	Sept. 6	No. 13	Dec. 20
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No. 10	Nov. 22	No. 22	June
No. 11	Nov. 29	No. 23	July
No. 12	Dec. 6	No. 24	August

The next issue (Dec. 20 cover date) will be mailed the week of Dec. 20.

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

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OSU Ends Streak, Throttles Michigan

Ryan Day and his Ohio State coaching staff and players can finally turn the page on a drawn-out nightmare, exorcising their Michigan demons just in time to embark on what they hope will be the road to a second consecutive national championship.

Shaking off a tilted start that had everyone in every corner of Buckeye Nation murmuring, “Oh, no. Not again,” the Buckeyes spotted their archrivals a 6-0 lead at the 9:42 mark of the first quarter before rolling to a decisive victory that was in no way indicative of the 27-9 final scoreboard tally.

Michigan running back Jordan Marshall gashed the OSU defense for a 36-yard run on the game’s first play from scrimmage, a bolt followed by a 10-yard pass play over the middle from freshman quarterback Bryce Underwood to Marshall. Two plays, two first downs, 46 yards. After that? Bupkis.

The Wolverines managed only seven first downs and 117 yards for the rest of the game, averaging 2.9 yards on their final 40 plays. Meanwhile, Ohio State rolled up 419 yards of total offense, including 186 on the ground, its highest total against Michigan since rushing for 264 yards in 2019 – not coincidentally the last taste of rivalry victory for the Buckeyes before this season.

Defensively, Ohio State lived up to its lofty ranking of No. 1 in the nation in scoring defense, total defense and pass defense, and its No. 2-ranked rushing defense throttled the Wolverines after that first play from scrimmage. Michigan managed exactly 100 yards on the ground, far off its average of 223.5 heading into the game (good for 10th in the nation) and its lowest output against the Buckeyes since that 2019 game when it gained only 91 yards on the ground. The Wolverines also failed to score a touchdown in the rivalry game for the first time since a 14-3 loss in 2007.

As lights out as the OSU defense played, underscore it with the fact the unit had to play with its back to the wall early in the game. After giving up a field goal to Michigan on its opening possession, the Wolverines got the ball back at the Ohio State 39-yard line after quarterback Julian Sayin pitched an interception on his second pass attempt of the game.

Marshall broke off a 21-yard run on second down to push the ball to the OSU 11, but the Wolverines stalled inside the red zone and had to settle for a chip-shot field goal to take a 6-0 lead. For the Ohio State defense, it marked the 20th time this season an opponent had ventured inside the red zone with only seven touchdowns surrendered. Did I fail to mention the Buckeyes are also the No. 1 team in the nation in terms of red-zone defense?

Offensively, Sayin was obviously aided by the return of star receivers Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate, each of whom had missed playing time lately because of lower-body injuries. After a couple of excellent defensive plays early, the Michigan secondary had no long-term answers for Smith or Tate, who combined for eight catches for 122 yards and two touchdowns.

But where the Buckeyes really exerted their will was in that running game, which must have given Day a case of the warm fuzzies. Ever since former Notre Dame head coach Lou Holtz publicly questioned Ohio State’s toughness, and certainly since Michigan rushed for 297 yards and six touchdowns during a 42-27 win in 2021, Day has had a burr in his saddle regarding the ruggedness of his team.

That question was answered with an emphatic statement possession that began in the waning minutes of the third quarter and stretched well into the final period. With snow

beginning to stick on the Michigan Stadium turf, Ohio State held the ball for 20 plays and marched 81 yards before Jayden Fielding kicked a 23-yard field goal for the final points of the game.

EDITOR’S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

That the drive ended with only three points is irrelevant. The Buckeyes relished pushing around the Wolverines and holding the ball for nearly 12 minutes. It was the same kind of smothering, boa constrictor-type of ball-control offense Nick Saban utilized with the likes of Mark Ingram, Trent Richardson, Eddie Lacy, T.J. Yeldon and Derrick Henry at Alabama to win multiple national championships throughout the 2010s.

The Buckeyes rotated freshmen Bo Jackson and Isaiah West with senior battering ram CJ Donaldson Jr. at running back during that 20-play possession and converted four third downs – three of them by Sayin (a scramble and two sneaks). Michigan was just 1 for 9 in third-down conversions for the entire game.

One final exclamation point for the Buckeyes came in the fourth quarter with the clock winding down to the 4:00 mark. A demoralized Michigan defense seemed powerless to stop Donaldson as he easily converted a fourth-and-1 play after which Day could be seen giving a little fist pump on the sideline.

Jackson finished the game with 117 yards on 22 carries and became the first OSU player to crack the century mark against Michigan since J.K. Dobbins rushed for 211 yards and four touchdowns during the aforementioned 2019 game. Jackson also rushed for the most yards by an Ohio State true freshman in The Game since Maurice Claret had 119 yards during a 14-9 win in 2002.

It’s Down To Two

If the logic some pundits are using to hype the Heisman Trophy candidacy of Indiana quarterback Fernando Mendoza is accurate, they should apply the same to Sayin.

In early November, Mendoza connected with receiver Omar Cooper Jr. for a 22-yard touchdown with 32 seconds remaining to grab a 27-24 victory at Penn State. Mendoza, who directed the last-minute drive of 80 yards in 10 plays, was the one who had put his team at a disadvantage with a fourth-quarter interception that the Nittany Lions turned into a 24-20 lead with 6:27 remaining.

But seconds after Cooper’s acrobatic toe-tap catch at the back of the end zone, ESPN analyst Matt Barrie lauded Mendoza’s effort as a “championship-type drive,” failing to note that it came against a reeling team that had lost its sixth straight game.

Sayin did himself or his team no favors at the beginning of the game against Michigan, underthrowing a deep ball to Tate on the first play of his team’s opening possession and then making a rookie mistake by trying to force a sideline throw to a double-covered Smith, another underthrown ball that was intercepted by Michigan cornerback Jyaire Hill.

That turnover gave the Wolverines possession at the OSU 39, and although the defense forced Michigan to settle for a field goal, Sayin was responsible for at least half of his team’s early 6-0 deficit.

I would dare say that most redshirt fresh-

men might have felt a severe case of cotton mouth after making such an unforced error in front of 111,373 mostly hostile fans. Certainly, Ohio State quarterbacks with more experience have allowed their own mistakes to compound their team’s problems in the rivalry game.

Sayin, however, reverted to the coolness he has displayed for most of the season, connecting on 13 of his next 15 pass attempts while leading the Buckeyes to a 17-9 halftime lead. Then, as the OSU defense was stonewalling Michigan in the third quarter, Sayin hit five of his first six throws during the period, adding a 50-yard touchdown pass to Tate that was the backbreaker.

Despite the mercury remaining in the 20s and windblown snow flurries conspiring to make throwing the ball an iffy proposition, Sayin finished the game 19 of 26 (73.1 percent) for 233 yards and three touchdowns. He has completed at least 65 percent of his attempts in all 12 games so far this season and has topped 70 percent in 10 of the 12. Mendoza has completed at least 70 percent of his attempts in five of his 12 games this season.

The dueling QBs will get to file their closing arguments during the Big Ten Championship Game – and likely give the conference its first Heisman winner since Troy Smith in 2006.

Winning With Humility

Reflecting on the fact that it was nearly six years to the day since he had experienced victory against his program’s archrival, Day nearly let his emotions get the best of him when Fox sideline reporter Jenny Taft asked what the win meant to him.

Mindful of the Michigan players’ unsuccessful attempt to plant their flag on the Block O at midfield of Ohio Stadium and probably noticing the Wolverines protecting their own midfield turf, Day said simply, “We’re going to win with humility.”

Later during his postgame press conference, Day expounded a little further.

“I’ve thought, as you can imagine, over the years after winning this game what I’d say in this press conference, and I’m going to save all those comments because I think the best thing to do is win with humility and that’s what we’re going to do,” he said. “I think that speaks to our program (and) it speaks to what it means to be a Buckeye.”

Social media denizens and the usual Internet trolls I mentioned in this column last week immediately called out Day for “taking a blatant shot” at Michigan with his comment. I would only say that if you think the idea of wanting to show some humility in victory is some kind of character shortcoming, you might want to reassess your life.

Yes, there were some unfortunate incidents from both sides – including Michigan linebacker Jaishawn Barham appearing to headbutt an official and Ohio State cornerback Davison Igbinosun ripping off his helmet to celebrate his fourth-quarter interception. Both incidents incurred 15-yard unsportsmanlike penalties – as they should have – and were but two of seven such penalties called during the afternoon by an officiating crew that at different junctures looked dangerously close to losing control of the game.

Still, Day’s statement about winning with humility makes ending Michigan’s winning streak against the Buckeyes all that much sweeter. Because in the end, which do you prefer? A coach who accepts a suspension for his role in a cheating scandal his predecessor swears never happened or one who accepts the responsibility of what it takes to lose 14 starters and rebuild a championship team the right way?

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Receivers Back Against Michigan

Ohio State's two star wide receivers, Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate were both listed as questionable on the injury report going into Ohio State's 27-9 win over Michigan on Nov. 29, but both were able to play in the win.

Throughout the week, head coach Ryan Day said that everyone was participating in practice and both had been working hard to get back on the field.

Tate had been out since the Purdue contest on Nov. 8 when he wasn't listed on the injury report before the game but was held out after he felt something in pregame warmups. He hadn't played since the Penn State game on Nov. 1.

Smith played in the first half of the UCLA win on Nov. 15 but was held out of the second half and was seen limping off the field after the game. He didn't play the next week in Ohio State's 42-9 win over Rutgers.

Check out game notebook on page 10 for more information on how Smith and Tate played against the Wolverines.

OSU Women's Soccer Team Falls In Elite Eight

Ohio State's women's soccer team capped off its best season in over a decade, earning upsets in three straight NCAA tournament games on its way to clinching its first Elite Eight appearance in 15 years.

Following a 2-0 victory over No. 19 Georgia (No. 8 seed in the region), a 1-0 double-overtime win against No. 2 Notre Dame (No. 1 seed), and a 2-1 double-overtime win over No. 23 Baylor (No. 5), Ohio State was set for a matchup against Florida State, which was ranked No. 6 nationally.

However, Ohio State's national championship hopes fell short in the national quarterfinals, as the Buckeyes fell to the No. 3-seeded Seminoles 4-1 on Nov. 28 at Seminole Soccer Complex in Tallahassee, Fla.

After over 35 scoreless minutes of action, Florida State junior forward Jordynn Dudley broke the stalemate with back-to-back goals in the 36th and 40th minutes to give the Seminoles a 2-0 lead heading into halftime.

Just after the break, Ohio State bounced back with a long-range goal by junior forward Amanda Schlueter, assisted by junior midfielders Berkley Mape and Elle Britt, to cut Florida State's lead to one in the 50th minute.

It marked Schlueter's team-high 11th goal of the season. While Schlueter had three game-winning goals this season, no other Buckeye scored more than three times overall in

2025. The Union, Ky., native also led Ohio State with five assists on the year.

The Buckeyes' excitement was short-lived. Just over a minute later, Florida State responded as junior midfielder Yuna McCormack put in a shot off dishes from Dudley and freshman forward Nyanya Touray.

Florida State added an insurance goal off the foot of sophomore forward Wrianna Hudson in the 85th minute to seal its 4-1 victory and a trip to the Final Four.

Ohio State ended its season 11-5-6, with a 4-2-5 record in Big Ten play. Buckeye senior defender Mirann Gacioch was named first-team All-Big Ten, while senior goalie Molly Pritchard earned first-team conference honors and was named Big Ten Goalkeeper of the Year.

Pritchard had eight saves against Florida State, bringing her career total to 306, moving her up to second on Ohio State's all-time saves list behind Amber Barnes (1997-2001), who had 416. She is also the program's all-time leader with 32 shutouts.

Pritchard is one of five Ohio State seniors who have exhausted their eligibility, including fellow goalkeeper Arden La-Rose, defenders Gacioch and Sophia Louder, as well as midfielder Ella Giannola.

— Sam Cipriani

Cignetti Says OSU Has Held Back

After both teams went a perfect 12-0 in the regular season, Indiana and Ohio State will square off in the Big Ten Championship Game.

It's the Hoosiers' first time in the Big Ten Championship Game, and Indiana head coach Curt Cignetti has nothing but respect for his opponent, the No. 1-ranked Buckeyes. On Nov. 30, Cignetti hinted that he believes that there might be another level to Ohio State.

"Sometimes when you watch Ohio State, the game is in hand, and I know (head coach Ryan Day) is banking on playing a really long season," Cignetti said. "They huddle, and they're not interested in running a lot of plays on offense. It's almost like they're holding back a little bit. But they're super explosive and capable of scoring from anywhere on the field at any time."

Ohio State quarterback Julian Sayin and Indiana QB Fernando Mendoza were the top two players in odds to win the Heisman Trophy as BSB went to press, and with ballots not due until Dec. 8, this game will likely have a huge impact on that race. Cignetti understands the skill that Sayin brings to the game.

"Julian Sayin is a tremendous football player," he said. "He's young but doesn't play like he's young. He's got a super quick release. He's very accurate, and he's mobile."

He also noted the Buckeye offense's ability to be balanced, which it showed on Nov. 29 against Michigan, with three passing touchdowns to take the lead before running the ball 16 times on a drive that took up 11:56 of game time and gaining a total of 186 yards on the ground against Michigan.

But Cignetti knows that he has a very good team as well. Indiana is currently ranked No. 2 in the country, and the head coach feels that they are getting more respect this year after going into Autzen Stadium in October and beating Oregon by 10 points.

Tressel Bets With Michigan Lt. Gov.

Ohio lieutenant governor and former Ohio

State head coach Jim Tressel expressed his confidence in his former team with a wager on Nov. 28.

Tressel announced on Twitter that he and Michigan Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II agreed the loser of this year's Ohio State vs. Michigan game must wear the rival's sweater vest in their respective statehouse.

"The game is one of the greatest traditions in all of sports," Tressel's post read. "I like our chances heading into the game and have great faith in our guys. Let's go Bucks!"

Garlin also shared his support for Michigan via his Twitter account.

"I look forward to watching the Wolverines beat the Buckeyes for the fifth year in a row," he said. "Forever Go Blue!"

In his 10 seasons at Ohio State, Tressel earned a 106-22 overall record, including a 14-0 perfect season and national championship in 2002 as well as a 9-1 record in his 10 bouts with Michigan.

The Buckeyes made sure Tressel won his bet with their win over Michigan.

Marshall Takes Jab At OSU

On Nov. 25, Michigan running back Jordan Marshall shared his excitement to play in The Game, while also firing a shot at Ohio State. The Wolverines' star sophomore running back missed his team's 45-20 win over Maryland on Nov. 22 with a shoulder injury, but at least heading into The Game he was excited to get back on the field against the Buckeyes.

"I'm ready to go. I'm ready to hit somebody. I'm ready to run in that end zone again," Marshall said. "Again, it was exciting to watch (Michigan's backup running backs). That's what this is all about is seeing everybody else's success. That's when you know you're doing a great job. For me, getting to see those guys do that was exciting. I'm just excited to go out there and go to war with them."

Coming out of Moeller High School in Cincinnati, Marshall was ranked the No. 78 overall player, the No. 4 running back and the No. 3 player in Ohio. Despite Marshall's Ohio roots,

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2025 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Aug. 30	TEXAS	W, 14-7	FOX	9-3, 27-17 win over Texas A&M
Sept. 6	GRAMBLING	W, 70-0	BTN	7-5, 28-27 loss to Southern
Sept. 13	OHIO	W, 37-9	Peacock	8-4, 31-26 win over Buffalo
Sept. 27	at Washington	W, 24-6	CBS	8-4, 26-14 loss to Oregon
Oct. 4	MINNESOTA	W, 42-3	NBC	7-5, 17-7 win over Wisconsin
Oct. 11	at Illinois	W 34-16	FOX	8-4, 20-13 win over Northwestern
Oct. 18	at Wisconsin	W, 34-0	CBS	4-8, 17-7 loss to Minnesota
Nov. 1	PENN STATE	W, 38-14	FOX	6-6, 40-36 win over Rutgers
Nov. 8	at Purdue	W, 34-10	BTN	2-10, 56-3 loss to Indiana
Nov. 15	UCLA	W, 48-10	NBC	3-9, 29-10 loss to USC
Nov. 22	RUTGERS	W, 42-9	FOX	5-7, 40-36 loss to Penn State
Nov. 29	at Michigan	W, 27-9	FOX	9-3, 27-9 loss to Ohio State
Dec. 6	Big Ten Championship*	8 p.m.	FOX	
* vs. Indiana at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)				

the Cincinnati native ultimately chose Michigan over Ohio State.

When asked why he chose the Wolverines, Marshall took a subtle dig at the Buckeyes. Marshall said that running backs coach Tony Alford would have been the reason he chose Ohio State if he had done so, but he said that the Michigan culture was a big factor in his decision.

“I really liked Tony Alford. He would probably be one of the reasons that I went there,” Marshall said. “I didn’t like a few other people

(at Ohio State), and that’s truly why I didn’t pick them. I think Coach Alford would tell you the same. He came here, and he sees the best head coach in the Big Ten, in college football, and how he carries himself and how he puts himself over the team. It’s all about culture, and that’s what I wanted to be around. I didn’t want to be around people that were about themselves, and I truly just believe that. That’s why Coach Alford came here, too. He knew that he wanted to be around better people.”

Marshall emerged as a key contributor for Michigan this season with Haynes sidelined. In 11 games, he has rushed 150 times for 932 yards and 10 touchdowns, while also catching nine passes for 92 yards.

Against Ohio State, Marshall had to leave in the first quarter after reportedly reaggravating the shoulder injury that kept him out of the Maryland game. Marshall returned in the third quarter of the game, but at that point Ohio State had control of the game. Still, Marshall finished with 61 rushing yards on seven carries and a catch for 10 yards.

Saban: OSU Fans ‘Psychotic’

Former Alabama head coach and seven-time national champion Nick Saban still thinks Ohio State fans are obsessed with The Game. In an episode of the Pat McAfee show on Nov. 26, the legendary head coach said Buckeye fans are psychotic about the rivalry.

“I said it last year, these Ohio State fans, they’re psychotic about this,” Saban said. “They all need to go see a doctor someplace. I’d rather win the national championship than beat Michigan. That’s just me, although I’d love to beat Michigan, don’t get me wrong.”

One reason the rivalry has been the source of so much focus for Ohio State fans is that the team has struggled recently against Michigan. Heading into this year’s matchup, the Buckeyes hadn’t defeated their rivals since 2019. After Ohio State’s loss to Michigan in 2024, Day and his family surrounded their house with armed guards due to threats they received.

Saban, who coached in another spirited

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

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

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

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rivalry, the Iron Bowl, and went 12-5 against Auburn, said he would try to minimize the distractions in big games.

"I tried to minimize the noise, knowing that the players are hearing all these things," Saban said. "What I wanted our players to do is think that it's going to be about what we do. So let's focus on what we do to have to go execute and play our best football in the game, and things will take care of themselves."

It certainly seemed like the Buckeyes took Saban's advice on Nov. 29 during a win in which they outgained the Wolverines 419-163.

Jackson Named B1G Freshman Of Week

Following a dominant performance in Ohio State's 42-9 victory over Rutgers on Nov. 22, running back Bo Jackson was named the Big Ten Freshman of the Week.

In the win, Jackson rushed a career-high 19 times for 110 yards and two touchdowns. He helped add to an Ohio State rushing attack that earned its second-highest team total this season with 254 yards and four touchdowns.

Jackson rushed for 100 yards or more in six games this season and crossed that mark in four of Ohio State's last five games.

It was Jackson's first time this season earning conference honors, while teammate and quarterback Julian Sayin has been named Big Ten Freshman of the Week four times this year.

In 11 games this season Jackson has carried the ball 151 times for 952 yards and five touchdowns. The freshman also brought in 17

Big Ten Championship Game Coverage Online Only

Buckeye Sports Bulletin's coverage of the Big Ten Championship Game against Indiana in Indianapolis will be online only at our BuckeyeSports.com website. Stories will start to post immediately following the end of the game and will continue to post through the evening and into the following day.

For those of you who have been reluctant to read any of Buckeye Sports Bulletin's electronic offerings, now would be a great time to start. For simple instructions email us at subscriptions@buckeyesports.com with your preferred email address, and we will send you instructions on how to access the site, including reading the complete edition of the print Buckeye Sports Bulletin on the same day it is published.

This is the final issue of BSB's weekly fall print schedule. The next print edition of BSB (Dec. 20 cover date) will be mailed the week of Dec. 20 and will preview the playoffs and cover football recruiting's early signing period. We will return to our biweekly winter/spring printing schedule in January 2026.

There is no reason to wait for your next Buckeye Sports Bulletin print edition to get the latest OSU sports news, including coverage of the championship game, early signing period and playoff. The BSB staff will be reporting from every press conference or other availability and following all of the Ohio State sports activity. All the news is available in real time at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com.

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

Along with daily posts, we offer reprints from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives as part of our popular Reprint Thursdays.

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.

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

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passes for 187 yards and one score.

Three Players Of The Game Named

Ohio State senior defensive end Caden Curry was named Player of the Game in the win over Rutgers.

In Ohio State's Senior Day victory over the Scarlet Knights, Curry was dominant, leading Ohio State with six total tackles (four solo) and two sacks while also forcing a fumble that he recovered and took to the Rutgers 1-yard line.

Through 12 games this season, the Greenwood, Ind., product was tied for third on Ohio State with 53 tackles and was first on the Buckeyes with 13½ tackles for loss and nine sacks. Curry led Ohio State with five quarterback hurries as well as two fumble recoveries, also adding a forced fumble and a pass breakup. Curry's sack total was tied for 13th in the FBS.

Two more Buckeyes earned Special Teams

Player of the Game honors. Punter Joe McGuire and long snapper John Ferlmann each earned that distinction. McGuire, who at times has struggled with consistency this year, had a solid performance against Rutgers with two punts that went for an average of 43.0 yards and had one punt that was downed at Rutgers' 1-yard line.

OSU No. 1 In CFP, AP

Following Ohio State's win over Rutgers, the Buckeyes were ranked No. 1 in the nation heading into the final week of the regular season.

Ohio State had yet to give up the top spot of the College Football Playoff rankings since the initial rankings came out on Nov. 4. The top five remained unchanged with No. 2 Indiana, No. 3 Texas A&M, No. 4 Georgia and No. 5 Texas Tech trailing the Buckeyes.

Rounding out the top 12 were No. 6 Oregon, No. 7 Ole Miss, No. 8 Oklahoma, No. 9 Notre Dame, No. 10 Alabama and No. 11 BYU, and No. 12 Miami (Fla.).

However, BYU would not be included in the bracket if the season ended when those rankings were released, with No. 24 Tulane taking the final spot as the fifth-highest-ranked conference leader.

No. 22 Pittsburgh returned to the top 25 following a 42-28 win on Nov. 22 over Georgia Tech, which fell to No. 23.

Arizona jumped into the top 25 for the first time this season at No. 25.

Ohio State was also ranked No. 1 in the AP poll for the 14th week in a row after beating Michigan and hasn't relinquished its top spot since beating then-No. 1 Texas 14-7 in Week 1.

Five Bucks Awards Finalists

The undefeated and No. 1-ranked Buckeyes could have several players bringing home major hardware at the end of the season. Five Buckeyes were named finalists for national awards since BSB last went to press.

Junior safety Caleb Downs was named a finalist for defensive player of the year awards, the Bednarik Award and Bronko Nagurski Trophy. Additionally, Downs was named a finalist for the Thorpe Award, given to the best defensive back in the country.

Downs was also named a finalist for the Lott Impact Trophy, which honors on-field performance, academic standing, community contributions, leadership and overall character.

Downs has had another great season this year with the Buckeyes. His 52 total tackles were tied for the fourth most on the team, and his two interceptions were tied for the most on the team.

Sayin was also named a finalist for multiple awards. The Buckeye signal-caller was named a finalist for the Maxwell Award, given to the most outstanding player in college football, and the Davey O'Brien Award, given to the best quarterback in the country.

Smith was one of three finalists for the Biletnikoff Award, given to the best receiver in



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the country. Smith missed time in Ohio State's two contests before Michigan, but he still finished the regular season with 72 catches for 943 yards and 11 touchdowns on the season.

Junior defensive tackle Kayden McDonald was named a finalist for the Outland Trophy, which is awarded to the best interior lineman in the country. McDonald has had a career-best year for the Buckeyes. In his first year as a starter, McDonald had totaled 52 tackles, three sacks and two forced fumbles.

Finally, sophomore linebacker Arvell Reese was named a finalist for the Butkus Award, which is given annually to the top linebacker in the country. Reese has also had a spectacular season. Reese's 61 total tackles were the second most on the team, and his 6½ sacks were also the second most on the team.

JSN On Pace To Break Receiving Record

In just his third professional season with Seattle, former Ohio State wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba is on pace to make NFL history. Through 11 games this season, Smith-Njig-

ba led the NFL with 80 receptions for 1,313 yards and was averaging 119.4 yards per game through the air, which would mean he was on pace to become the first 2,000-yard receiver in NFL history if he continued that pace for the next six games. Calvin Johnson set the single-season receiving record with 1,964 yards for the Detroit Lions in 2012, meaning Smith-Njigba would need just 651yards to break the record.

Following his best performance of the year where Smith-Njigba had eight catches, two touchdowns and a season-high 167 yards in the Seahawks' 30-24 win over the Tennessee Titans, the third-year receiver came one step closer to breaking the record that has stood for 13 years.

Smith's first score came on a 63-yard touchdown pass from Seattle quarterback Sam Darnold four minutes into the second quarter, before he hauled in a 56-yard pass and a 13-yard touchdown catch on the Seahawks' first drive of the second half.

In the win Smith-Njigba passed former Seattle wide receiver DK Metcalf for the most re-

ceiving yards in a single season by a Seahawks wideout.

Kelly Fired By Raiders Midseason

Following a tumultuous 2-9 start to the season in which Las Vegas featured one of the league's worst offenses, the Raiders fired offensive coordinator Chip Kelly, who held the same position at Ohio State last year, the team announced Nov. 23.

"I spoke with Chip Kelly earlier this evening and informed him of his release as offensive coordinator of the Raiders," said Raiders head coach Pete Carroll. "I would like to thank Chip for his service and wish him all the best in the future."

After helping Ohio State to a national championship in 2024, Kelly was hired to Carroll's staff in the 2025 offseason for a reported \$6 million per year, making him the highest-paid coordinator in the NFL.

However, Kelly's return to the NFL didn't go as planned. Through 11 games, Las Vegas' offense earned just 268.9 yards per game, the

third-worst mark in the league. Despite drafting Boise State running back Ashton Jeanty sixth overall in the first round of the 2024 NFL draft, the Raiders had rushed for a mere 79.5 yards per game on the ground, the second-lowest average in the NFL.

At Ohio State Kelly led a dominant offense in 2024-25, when the Buckeyes held the 14th ranked scoring offense, averaging 35.7 points per game.

When asked on Nov. 25 if he would give Kelly a chance to return to Ohio State, Day downplayed the idea, saying he wasn't focused on staff decisions with Michigan on the horizon.

"I would say (I'm) not thinking about that right now," Day said. "There's just too much going on. I do think right now we have great chemistry, but we've got to be on our game as a coaching staff this week. We must be clean. We must be great with our meetings. We must be great on the field and allow the guys to play really, really fast. So all of that has been working up to this moment here. So that's not something I thought about, and right now, we're going to stick with what we've got."

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1985

Michigan coach Bo Schembechler said it one way. Ohio State quarterback Jim Karsatos agreed. And John Kolesar did it his way.

But they all washed ashore in one bottle – Michigan 27, Ohio State 17.

"The catch by Kolesar was definitely a play that took the starch out of their sails," said Schembechler, rehashing a 77-yard scoring play on a pass from Wolverine quarterback Jim Harbaugh to Kolesar, a freshman flanker out of Westlake, Ohio.

"There's no doubt that took the air out of our sails," said Karsatos, who completed 17 of 31 passes for 179 yards and one touchdown as the Buckeyes lost their second straight game to close out the regular season at 8-3.

But it was Kolesar who actually sank the Buckeye ship.

35 Years Ago — 1990

Experts would likely long analyze the prudence of Ohio State's failed quarterback dive play late in the fourth quarter against Michigan.

On that play, a fourth down with less than a yard to go, OSU quarterback Greg Frey was stopped at the line of scrimmage for no gain by Michigan defensive tackle Mike Evans, which set the stage for the Wolverines to kick a field goal as time expired to win, 16-13.

As things turned out, the Buckeyes missed out on a chance to win their first outright Big Ten championship and first trip to the Rose Bowl since 1984.

Ohio State finished fifth in the Big Ten standings with a 5-2-1 record, a half game ahead of Minnesota at 5-3.

Following the contest, most reporters wanted to talk about head coach John Cooper's decision to go for the victory in general and, in particular, the quarterback dive play.

"I've been telling this football squad ever since the Indiana game that I really felt like we had a chance to go ahead and win out and go to the Rose Bowl," said the third-year OSU coach. "So why not follow up on that? Why not go for broke? A tie didn't do us any good at all. All a tie would have done is put us in the Gator Bowl."

30 Years Ago — 1995

Ohio State's dream season, complete with visions of the Rose Bowl and a national championship, turned into a nightmare on Nov. 25 at the Big House.

Unbeaten and untied, the second-ranked Buckeyes went into Ann Arbor, Mich., looking for a win in order to lock up the school's first Rose Bowl berth in 11 years.

Instead, Michigan tailback Tim Biakabutuka locked up would-be OSU tacklers all day, rushing for 313 yards – the most ever by an Ohio State opponent – as the 18th-ranked Wolverines upset their archrivals 31-23 and knocked the Buckeyes out of the Rose Bowl hunt.

"I've never been as disappointed in my life as I am right now, sitting here today," said OSU coach John Cooper, whose team fell to 11-1 overall and finished second in the Big Ten behind perennial dormant-turned-Rose Bowl-bound Northwestern (10-1, 8-0).

25 Years Ago — 2000

Playing with a Big Ten championship hanging in the balance, Michigan prolonged its 16-year dominance of Ohio State.

The 19th-ranked Wolverines knocked off the 12th-ranked Buckeyes 38-26 in The Game on Nov. 18 at Ohio Stadium. Michi-

gan had won 12 of the last 16 games. played in this rivalry, including a mark of 10-2-1 against OSU teams coached by John Cooper.

The loss dropped Ohio State to 8-3 overall and 5-3 in Big Ten play, one game behind co-champions Michigan, Northwestern and Purdue.

"Obviously, my record against Michigan speaks for itself," Cooper said. "Obviously, it's awful.

"And to play here at home, have a chance to beat Michigan for a chance at the Big Ten championship, obviously I'm disappointed."

20 Years Ago — 2005

Fighting his way through a contemptuous crowd of celebrating Penn State fans on the night of Oct. 8, A.J. Hawk made his way onto the team bus and eased his aching body into a seat.

Staring out the window into the cool Pennsylvania night, the Ohio State linebacker and co-captain probably couldn't help wondering what had happened to his senior season that began with such promise.

The Buckeyes had lost a 17-10 decision to the Nittany Lions, giving them two losses and ending any lingering aspirations for a national championship.

But once the team arrived back in Columbus and gathered for its first post-Penn State practice, the seniors decided that enough was enough.

"We got together and decided that we weren't going to lose another game," Hawk said. "We had six more games to play, and we decided we were going to treat every one of them as its own season."

As a result, the singular-minded Buckeyes reeled off six consecutive victories to finish their 2005 campaign, topping it off with a stirring 25-21 comeback at Michigan, earning a share of the Big Ten championship.

15 Years Ago — 2010

This time, there was no trophy to be presented in Ohio Stadium. No Ohio State players danced on the sideline with roses clenched between their teeth, and only a handful of intrepid fans rushed the field as the final seconds ticked off.

That might ring like an indictment rather than an endorsement, but in reality, it was a reflection of what had almost become as reliable as the arrival of Christmas morning for the Buckeyes. On a chilly, Nov. 27 afternoon in front of the OSU faithful, the home team clinched a share of its sixth consecutive Big Ten championship by earning its record-setting seventh consecutive victory against rival Michigan (7-5, 3-5).

This one was a 37-7 affair that easily could have been more lopsided had the Buckeyes opted to run up the score in the second half.

"I think first and foremost, it's important to never lose to Michigan as a Buckeye, which is unusual, and to end up with five rings from championships is another accolade," said senior linebacker and team captain Ross Homan. "I'm so blessed with these seniors, these coaches, this whole team. It's a dream come true."

10 Years Ago — 2015

It finally clicked.

On a cold, dreary day in Ann Arbor, the Ohio State fans who dotted the sea of maize and blue in Michigan Stadium finally got to watch the team they thought they'd see all season.

OSU Recovered From Slow Start With No Panic

Continued From Page 1

he appreciated being part of the rivalry in general, especially this season when snow started falling midway through the game.

"For me, I'm a fourth-year guy," Styles said. "I was 0-3 coming to this game, so I really wanted it.

"I remember, I was in the fourth quarter. I was talking to (sophomore linebacker) Payton Pierce on the bench, and I'm like, 'Man, we're playing in The Game right now, both teams are trying to get the Big Ten championship. It's snowing. It's the end of November.' It's the stuff you dream about."

And the win he dreamed about came true as well.

But for Day, it seemed like the reality that he had finally gotten the Michigan monkey off his back might have fully hit home in the middle of his press conference after the game.

He was asked about what the win means to him personally after all he has been through because of the losing streak – being threatened, hiring armed guards to monitor his house, etc.

In classic Day fashion, he didn't talk about himself much, but his reaction to the question may have given away how he felt. He looked down when the question was asked and let out a big sigh before giving his answer, seemingly allowing himself to relax now that he has a win over Michigan with a team that he has built himself.

"To tell you that the last four years have been easy is not true," Day said. "I take the responsibility of being the head coach at Ohio State very seriously. So does my family. So do the players and the coaches. So when you don't accomplish those things, you take it personally, and I understand what that means.

"My family's been here nine years now,

so there's nobody who wants to win this game more than me. But to win this game, it's just a great moment. It's one of those moments that you want to just grab onto for a while and just enjoy it.

"The last couple of years feel like you're letting everybody down. That's just not a good feeling. So you work like hell just to make sure that you do everything you can to get your guys prepared, and that's all you can do. That's exactly what happened here. It was a buildup all year, and man, our guys really captured the moment and played great."

Air It Out

Most Ohio State fans likely remember Day parroting the same stat leading up to last season's stunning loss to Michigan.

The team that had won the rushing battle in the 22 years prior had won The Game. He treated it as a necessity that the Buckeyes had to win the rushing contest and seemed to make that his priority in the game, moving away from the usual game plan the OSU offense had before that matchup.

Even with that approach, the Buckeyes still lost the rushing battle, and the streak continued when the Wolverines left Ohio Stadium on top of the rivalry with a 13-10 score.

But this season, that wasn't the case. On the second offensive play of the game for Ohio State, redshirt-freshman Julian Sayin threw his fifth interception of the season, and just his second against a Power Four team, giving the ball to Michigan in OSU territory.

In 2023, Kyle McCord threw a pick in Buckeye territory that led to a Michigan score, and in 2024, Will Howard did the same thing.

But instead of panicking and forcing a more conservative game plan, Day chose to trust his usually accurate quarterback and allowed him to keep slinging the rock, which couldn't have worked out better for the Buckeyes.

While it may have taken a couple of drives to get into a groove, Sayin ended up completing 19 of his next 24 pass attempts for three touchdowns, throwing one to each of Jeremiah Smith, Carnell Tate and Brandon Inniss.

The former Southern California five-star recruit played well even though it was the first time he had ever been in game action in the snow. Sayin said after the game that the next coldest game he had played in that he could remember was around 50 degrees in high school.

"It wasn't like this at all," he said. "It's not similar at all."

On the drive immediately before Sayin's pick, Michigan started the game with a 36-yard run by Jordan Marshall, which had Day surprised.

"When I saw the first run hit, I said, 'You've got to be kidding me right now. This is not what I expected at all.' " he said. "Then we threw the pick, and he came off and said, 'I thought it was Cover 1 and it was Cover 2.' I'm like, 'Jeez, OK, that's not what we wanted for a start.' "

But the Buckeyes ended up controlling



SONNY BROCKWAY

GOING NOWHERE — Senior linebacker Sonny Styles (0) brings down Michigan running back Jordan Marshall as junior safety Caleb Downs (2) arrives to help. Ohio State limited the Wolverines to 64 rushing yards on 23 carries (2.8 average) after Marshall ran for 36 yards on the first play from scrimmage.

the game from there, and Day was impressed with his team's ability not to panic when things were going wrong for them.

"There was no panic on our side," Day said. "I think the communication and the chemistry between the players and the coaches is very good right now, because when there's confusion, that's when there can be infighting, and all of a sudden, guys start to act a certain way. It didn't happen at all. We had a lot of confidence coming into it, and even after a slow start, we felt good."

Sayin finished the game completing 19 of 26 passes (73.1 percent) for 233 yards and three scores, which helped vault him back up in the race for the Heisman Trophy after two slower games against UCLA and Rutgers the previous two weeks.

Defensive end Caden Curry was asked

whether he believes the OSU quarterback should be the Heisman winner, and he was in full support of Sayin hoisting the trophy in New York.

"I mean, duh (he should win it)," Curry said. "He's such a great player and such a smart player, and he knows how to win."

Only Indiana quarterback Fernando Mendoza remains ahead of Sayin in the race for the Heisman, according to most oddsmakers, but with the two facing off in the Big Ten Championship Game a week after the rivalry game, and ballots due two days after the conference title games, it could be the winner of that game who takes the award home if they have a good game in Indianapolis.

Get Physical

If Day wanted to prove that he could win with a more physical team than Mich-



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igan has, ultimately, he got what he wanted. But it might not have happened the way he envisioned it would when he talked about it so much last year.

On the Buckeyes' second drive of the game, they made it down to the 2-yard line thanks to an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty on Michigan defensive end/linebacker Jaishawn Barham, and they had a first-and-goal.

With four tries to get into the end zone, OSU opted for a CJ Donaldson Jr. run up the middle that gained 1 yard, another Donaldson run for no gain and a Sayin sneak that was stopped short of the goal line. Then, on fourth down, tight end Bennett Christian was called for a false start and the Buckeyes had to settle for a field goal.

At that point in the game, Michigan was in control, and it still felt like Ohio State could be falling back into the trap that the Wolverines had caught them in the season before.

But that is when the pass game opened up. Both Smith and Tate got involved for the first time with a catch late in the first quarter, and on fourth-and-5 Ohio State scored a 35-yard touchdown to Smith to take a lead it wouldn't relinquish.

The next two scores came on a 4-yard slant to Inniss in the middle of the end zone late in the second quarter and a 50-yard bomb to a wide-open Tate, who cruised into the end zone easily in the third quarter for a 24-9 lead.

It was that third-quarter drive that per-

haps best showed what Ohio State can be as an offense when it uses the talented receiving weapons it has, along with the most accurate deep-ball thrower in the game right now.

That scoring drive was just two plays long to go 57 yards in 45 seconds.

But once OSU was up by two scores, that's when Day got to show off the physicality of his offense in the run game, thanks to the passing game opening up opportunities for freshman Bo Jackson.

The next time the Buckeyes got the ball back, they ran the ball 16 times in one drive, traveling 81 yards in 20 total plays that ultimately led to a field goal.

It wasn't until that drive, which lasted nearly 12 minutes, that Ohio State took the lead in the rushing battle,

By that time, the snow had started coming down harder, and Day trusted his defense to be able to stop the Wolverines if they got the ball back, and rightfully so. Patricia's unit allowed minus-8 rushing yards in the entire second half while the Buckeyes boasted 110.

Day was happy to see the play that he had seen from the Buckeyes earlier in the season translate into a snowy rivalry game.

"I always say, 'Yeah, this is all great, but how's it going to look when it's snowing sideways the Saturday after Thanksgiving?' " Day said. "That's exactly what it looked like today. It was snowing sideways, and that's the type of game you have to win."

He also may have given a warning to the rest of college football for what might be coming in the next two months, when every other game will likely be played in a dome or in warmer temperatures, possibly hinting that they could have run the score up more had the weather not been what it was.

"If we're playing this game in an indoor stadium somewhere, it's different, but that's what this game takes, and that's what we did. We won the line of scrimmage, and it was well done by the guys, but we felt like if we could get it to a three-score game, it was going to be hard for them to come back."

Sayin gave a lot of credit to the offensive line and how it was able to create space for runners throughout the game.

"That was awesome to see, the physicality that the runners ran with and the offensive line had," he said. "We wanted to end the game on our terms, keep running the ball, milk the clock, pick up the first downs and wear the defense down. Those guys up front did a really good job."

On To Indy

The Buckeyes (12-0, 9-0) will get to play in their first Big Ten Championship Game since the 2020 season.

They match up against Curt Cignetti's Hoosiers (12-0, 9-0) at Lucas Oil Stadium in what is likely to be a "Game of the Century" with the No. 1 and No. 2 teams facing off for the conference crown.

As a reminder, Ohio State sets three

goals every season. The first is to beat Michigan, which it checked off the list on Nov. 29. Next up is winning a Big Ten title and then winning another national championship.

Even though Day might feel good about the win over Michigan and ending the streak now, Styles knows that his attention will quickly be on what's ahead for his team.

"Coach Day is the kind of guy that's always on the chase," Styles said. "We won (the national championship) last year, and we came back in for our meetings for (this) season, and you could tell he was on the chase trying to get back to where we just came from."

"Obviously, this game feels good. This is one of our main three goals, and we haven't been able to get it the past few years. So it feels good to get it, but I think it's just bringing us into what's coming up next."

Curry noted that the motivation of this being the seniors' last chance to beat Michigan also applies to the Big Ten championship as well since it's their last opportunity to get a win in Indianapolis as well.

"(Beating Michigan is) definitely something I'll always remember," he said. "It's great to come up here and do it too. I'm definitely excited about that. Next week's my first time playing (for the conference title), too, so we have more to do."

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Bucks Stifle U-M Freshman QB Underwood

Ohio State's defense was excellent during the team's 27-9 win over Michigan on Nov. 29.

GAME NOTEBOOK Bobby Gorbett

The Buckeyes held freshman quarterback Bryce Underwood to just 8-of-18 passing for 63 yards, no touchdowns and an interception. It was far from the first time the Buckeye secondary had stifled an opposing quarterback. In fact, the Buckeyes have held seven opposing starting quarterbacks below 100 yards this season. Underwood, who is known for his athleticism, was also held to just 1 rushing yard on six carries.

"We definitely knew we had to keep him contained," said senior defensive end Caden Curry. "We knew he was a mobile guy, and we knew it was his first game, too, in this scenery and just how hostile it gets. We knew we had to keep him contained, and we just had to make him play quarterback. I feel like we did a good job of that. I feel like we had him rattled at times."

One reason Ohio State had such success against Underwood was that it didn't allow him to connect with his favorite target.

Talented freshman receiver Andrew Marsh was Michigan's leading receiver heading into the game but didn't have a single catch against Ohio State. It was the first time this season Marsh had been held without a catch in a game. Marsh didn't record an official target in the loss, only seeing the ball come his way on a pass interference penalty in the second quarter.

As it did last year, Michigan leaned heavily on its running game. The Wolverines attempted 24 runs as compared to just 18 passes. Michigan's running game was effective early on, running for 75 yards on 10 carries in the first quarter, and on the first play from scrimmage, star Michigan running back Jordan Marshall found a hole to go 36 yards that helped lead the team to a game-opening field goal.

"You always come into this game knowing they're going to have something schemed up that is going to hit," Curry said. "You just have to be able to step up the next play and figure it out on the sidelines, and I feel like we did a good job of getting over to the sidelines and figuring it out and just playing football. We're a bunch of guys out there who love the game, and we just do our job. When all 11 of us do our job, it's great to see."

Michigan went for just 33 yards on nine carries in the second quarter, and in the second half, it ran for minus-8 yards on five carries.

The 163 yards Michigan totaled was its lowest figure of the season, and it was the first time it failed to score a touchdown against the Buckeyes since their 14-3 loss in the 2007 iteration of The Game.

"It feels great," Curry said of the defense's performance. "We always come out



SONNY BROCKWAY

UNDER SIEGE — His first Michigan-Ohio State game was a rude awakening for Wolverines freshman quarterback Bryce Underwood. He was 8 of 18 for 63 yards and threw an interception while gaining 1 yard on six carries in the Buckeyes' 27-9 win.

knowing that we can be the best defense in college football, and we want to play the right way and play our game. We knew our offense would come out swinging, so we knew whatever they brought to us, we were going to stop. I feel like we just came out there and played as hard as we could and as fast as we could, and we were just kind of on top of it all day."

Smith and Tate Battle Through Injuries

Coming into the game, one of the biggest concerns for Buckeye fans was that star receivers Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate would be unavailable.

Both Tate and Smith were dealing with undisclosed injuries in the lead-up to the Michigan game, and each player had missed the team's 42-9 win over Rutgers the previous week. Against Michigan, though, both players came back from injury.

Neither player had the best performance of his career, but each made big plays to help propel the Buckeyes to the win. After the game, head coach Ryan Day was proud of how hard his receivers worked to get back on the field.

"Let's talk about Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate and what (assistant athletic director for athletic training) Sean Barnhouse and (physical therapist/athletic trainer) Adam Stewart did to help them get to be able to play in this game," Day said. "It was just tremendous. If you really know how much work they put in to get on the field and how gutsy they are — I'm sure the fans and everybody would just appreciate what they did to go out there and put it on the line."

Tate finished the game with a game-high five catches for 82 yards and a touchdown. He finished the first half with three catches for only 25 yards, but his catches were timely. Tate's first reception came on a third-and-7 play when he ran his curl route right at the line to gain and fell forward to move the chains. Then later on in the same drive, he helped Ohio State pick up a third-and-6 with a 9-yard reception.

Tate's biggest play, though, was undoubtedly his 50-yard touchdown reception that put the Buckeyes up 24-9 in the third quarter. On the play, Tate busted Michigan's coverage with a simple post route and found himself wide open deep into Wolverine territory. Redshirt-freshman quarterback

Julian Sayin threw a pass that hit Tate right in stride for the touchdown.

"Having Jeremiah and Carnell back was awesome. He ran a great route," Sayin said of Tate's long touchdown catch. "I feel like the sideline was (holding their breath) and waiting on it in the air — it was hanging in the air for a little bit — but he made a great catch."

Smith was a bit more limited than Tate, but he still finished the game with three catches for 40 yards and a touchdown.

Smith's first catch went for 1 yard, and his last one was only a 4-yarder, but his second catch was a game-changer.

The Buckeyes were trailing 6-3 early in the second quarter when they were faced with a fourth-and-5 play from Michigan's 35-yard line. On the play, Smith surged past Michigan defensive back Zeke Berry with a double move and hauled in the 35-yard touchdown from Sayin. The play had to survive a review before it was official.

According to Day, Smith's health prevented him from going over the play many times in practice, but clearly, they didn't need much rehearsal time to execute the key play.

"Quite honestly, Jeremiah was very, very limited. So the way that he played, with the way he did with really not getting many reps all week, is just a tribute to him. Then the throw that Julian made was tremendous, but that was the play that we had walked through," Day said of Smith's touchdown reception. "That wasn't a play that we've had a ton of practice on this week, really at all, but we talked about it, we walked through it, and you have to give our guys credit for putting it on the field."

"We felt like it was an aggressive call that we wanted to make at that moment, and so we did. Man, they put it on the field in a big way, but the protection was good, and obviously the throw and catch were excellent."

Fielding Redeems 2024 Woes

In his postgame press conference, Day made sure to highlight many coaches and players who played a role in the win, including kicker Jayden Fielding. Fielding, who notably struggled in Ohio State's 13-10 loss to Michigan last year, was reliable in the Buckeyes' win on Nov. 29. In addition to going a perfect 3 for 3 on his extra points, Fielding nailed a couple of field goals despite playing in snowy conditions.

"It was great to see Jayden make those kicks," Day said. "That's another story here, from last year and this year, and he had a great look in his eye this week, and those make a big difference."

Last year, Fielding's misses played a big role in the Buckeyes being upset by the Wolverines. In the loss, Fielding had just one 29-yard field goal and two misses from inside 40 yards.

This year, Fielding was asked to kick only chip shots, but he did his job. Fielding's first kick came from 24 yards out, after a costly false start penalty from tight end Bennett Christian. The kick initially seemed like it had a chance of missing, but it faded in between the uprights to cut

Game Analysis

What Worked Well

For the 24th straight year, the team that won the rushing battle was victorious in Ohio State and Michigan's bout. After the Wolverines dominated the Buckeyes in 2024, leading with a margin of 172-77, Ohio State flipped the script in its 27-9 victory in Ann Arbor on Nov. 29. The Buckeyes rushed 47 times for 186 yards as a team, while the Ohio State offense earned an average of 4.0 yards per carry.

Freshman running back Bo Jackson led the way for Ohio State, toting the ball 22 times for 117 yards on 5.3 yards per rush. Fellow rookie Isaiah West added 20 yards on six carries, while senior CJ Donaldson Jr. rushed 14 times for 44 yards.

Ohio State's run defense was stout against the Wolverines, holding Michigan's offense to just 100 yards on the ground and an average of 4.2 yards per carry. But those numbers were inflated by a 36-yard run by sophomore running back Jordan Marshall on the game's opening play and a 22-yard rush in the second quarter by junior back Bryson Kuzdzal. Outside of those two chunk runs, Michigan rushed for just 1.9 yards per carry.

What Didn't Work

In the week leading up to The Game, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day preached the importance of starting off strong. However, the Buckeyes did the opposite in The Game. Through the first 5:18, Michigan dominated Ohio State on both sides of the ball.

After Ohio State won the coin toss and deferred, Michigan reeled off a six-play, 48-yard drive that resulted in a 45-yard field goal from Wolverines kicker Dominic Zvada.

The worst was yet to come for Ohio State. Following the kickoff, it would take only two plays for Michigan to get the ball back. On the first play of the drive, redshirt-freshman quarterback Julian Sayin threw an incomplection outside the reach of the outstretched hands of wide receiver Carnell Tate.

Then on second-and-10, Sayin attempted to find wideout Jeremiah Smith on a comeback route

down the left sideline. However, Wolverine defensive back Jyaire Hill undercut the receiver and intercepted the pass on the Ohio State 39-yard line.

Hill's interception sparked a six-play drive where Michigan was able to march down to the Buckeye 7-yard line. Ohio State was fortunate that its defense held in the red zone, and the Buckeyes forced the Wolverines into a Zvada 24-yard field goal to go down by six.

Play Of The Game

After Ohio State forced a three-and-out and Michigan's first punt of the game, the Buckeyes received the ball on their own 37-yard line late in the first quarter. Ohio State then drove 19 yards down the field to the Michigan 35 before the drive stalled. With 5 yards to go for a first down, freshman running back Bo Jackson was stopped for no gain on both second and third down. That left Ohio State with a difficult choice, as the ensuing field-goal attempt would have been from 52 yards – 3 yards beyond kicker Jayden Fielding's career long.

Day elected to go for it, and it paid off for the Buckeyes. On fourth-and-5, Sayin dropped back to pass and fired a strike to Smith, streaking up the sideline. Smith shook Michigan defensive back Zeke Berry with an inside fake before breaking outside for a 35-yard touchdown catch.

Just as Smith crossed the 5-yard line, Michigan defensive back Brandyn Hillman hit the receiver towards the sideline causing him to slightly bobble the ball as he entered the end zone. Despite the controversy of whether Smith maintained control as he crossed the plane, the play was still ruled a touchdown, causing a review. However, after officials took a closer look the call was upheld. Sayin and Smith's pass and catch gave Ohio State a 10-6 advantage with just under 12 minutes to play in the second quarter, giving the Buckeyes a lead they would never relinquish. Just as Smith crossed the 5-yard line, the receiver bobbed the ball as he entered the end zone. After a lengthy review to determine whether it was a touchback, the call of a touchdown was upheld.

— Sam Cipriani

Michigan's early lead to 6-3.

Then, in the fourth quarter, Fielding was called upon again from 23 yards out. Fielding's second three-pointer put Ohio State up 27-9, and with just over eight minutes left in the game, the fourth-year's make virtually sealed the Buckeye victory.

Third Down An OSU Strength

One of the many differences between Ohio State and Michigan on Nov. 29 was the teams' respective abilities to keep drives alive on third down. The Buckeyes finished the game converting 10 of 17 third downs (58.8 percent) while the Wolverines converted only 1 of 9 third-down attempts (11.1 percent).

"(We converted) 10 third downs and we were 2 for 3 on fourth down, so 12 for 20 between the two of them," Day said. "Then I guess on defense, they were 1 for 9 on third down and 0 for 1 on fourth down. The defense did a great job on third down as well. We talked about winning the situations. Those were some big ones that came up in this game."

The Buckeyes certainly made it easy on themselves on third downs. The average distance to go on third downs for Ohio State was just 4.7 yards, while Michigan had to pick up an average distance of 9.3 yards on third down.

Ohio State also started out very strong on third down. The Buckeyes picked up seven of their first nine third-down conversions. On one second-half drive that lasted nearly 12 minutes, the Buckeyes picked up four third-down conversions before ultimately settling for a field goal.

OSU Overcomes Penalty Issues In Win

As usual, The Game was played with a consistent level of chippiness between both sides. In the win, Ohio State was flagged

for unsportsmanlike conduct four times, while Michigan was penalized for that infraction three times.

In total, Ohio State had six accepted penalties for 72 yards, while Michigan had just one accepted penalty for 3 yards. Many of the unsportsmanlike conduct penalties were committed by each team on the same play, meaning the infractions offset.

The Buckeyes' penalties were fairly damaging. Christian's false start on fourth-and-goal from the 1-yard line may have cost Ohio State four points.

After Day called a play-action pass from close to the goal line, it seemed like Sayin was poised to throw for his first touchdown of the game, before the play was blown dead due to Christian's penalty.

On the defensive end, starting outside cornerbacks Davison Igbinosun and Jermaine Mathews Jr. each committed pass interference penalties on third downs, which allowed the Wolverines to automatically move the chains.

The Buckeyes also had a couple of special teams flags. One unsportsmanlike penalty committed by Ohio State forced the offense to start at its own 13-yard line during a possession in the second quarter, and a 19-yard punt return from junior receiver Brandon Inniss was negated by a holding penalty in the fourth quarter.

OSU Headsets Malfunction

The Game has certainly not been an easy experience for the Buckeyes over the last four years, and although they were certainly dominant in their win over the Wolverines this year, an unforeseen problem arose late in the game. The Buckeyes' helmet communication stopped working, which meant Sayin had to get the play call directly from Day.

"Right at the beginning of the fourth quarter, it stopped working," Sayin said. "I told somebody, 'It feels like high school football.' I

was running over to the sideline to Coach Day to get the play, then run back. We were prepared, and we had a good plan going into it, but we had to adjust on the fly."

The issues with helmet communication

may have slightly slowed down Ohio State's offense. The Buckeyes totaled only 78 yards in the fourth, but with a 24-9 lead heading into the quarter, they were firmly in control of the game at that point.

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Snow Joke: Ohio State Pounds Wolverines

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Michigan players gathered at midfield, intent on preventing Ohio State from planting a flag there or otherwise desecrating the maize and blue Block "M," much in the manner one year earlier when the Wolverines attacked the Block "O" in Ohio Stadium with fervor after an upset.

This time, the Buckeyes had better things to do, such as celebrating a thorough and dominating 27-9 victory with their fans, knowing the wall of Wolverines postgame was the best defense U-M played all day.

Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate returned from injuries, and each had a touchdown catch. Quarterback Julian Sayin pumped his Heisman Trophy candidacy, and the running game was overwhelming when No. 1 Ohio State routed No. 15 Michigan to break a four-game losing streak in the series before 111,373 at Michigan Stadium in Ann Arbor on Nov. 29.

The Buckeyes (12-0, 9-0) will play No. 2 Indiana in the Big Ten Championship Game in Indianapolis on Dec. 6.

Smith and Tate were listed as questionable before the game. Tate had missed the previous three games and Smith one, but Smith's 35-yarder made it 10-6 after the Buckeyes trailed 6-0 to the Wolverines (9-3, 7-2).

A Brandon Inniss TD catch with 16 seconds left in the second quarter made it 17-9, and Tate's 50-yard reception midway through the third quarter extended the lead to 24-9.

Sayin was 19 of 26 for 233 yards, three touchdowns and an interception.

Tate made five catches for 82 yards, and Smith's three catches went for 40 yards.

Freshman Bo Jackson ran for 117 yards and had 49 receiving yards for the Buckeyes.

Settling Down

The Wolverines struck first after taking the opening kickoff under gray skies and a 29-degree temperature with a wind chill of 22.

On the first snap after the touchback, Jordan Marshall ran for 36 yards against the vaunted Buckeye defense to the OSU 39. Quarterback Bryce Underwood went with a no-huddle for a 10-yard pass to Marshall.

Marshall ran for 2, and Underwood was stopped for no gain. Before the third-down call, OSU called a timeout and then forced an incomplection, and Dominic Zvada kicked a 45-yard field goal for a 3-0 lead at 12:37.

The Wolverines extended the lead to 6-0 after Sayin, the most accurate passer in the country, was intercepted on the second play of Ohio State's first possession. Zvada made a 25-yard field goal at the 9:42 mark.

OSU started at the 25, and Sayin went deep to Tate, but it was broken up. Next, Sayin was picked off by Jyaire Hill on a pass for Smith at the OSU 39 with no return.

Underwood ran for 7, and Marshall galloped 21 yards to the 11. Underwood rushed for 2, as did Marshall. On third down, Underwood threw incomplete into the end zone, and the defense got a huge stop.

The Buckeyes again began from the 25 and squandered a chance to take the lead and settled for a 24-yard field goal from

Jayden Fielding with 4:33 left in the quarter.

On third-and-2 from the OSU 33, Sayin flipped a 5-yard pass to tight end Will Kacmarek for a new set of downs. Jackson took a short pass and turned it into a 23-yard play to the U-M 39 and followed with a 36-yard run down the right side to the 3.

Then it got interesting. Sayin overthrew Smith in the left corner, and CJ Donaldson Jr. lost 2 yards to the 5, but Michigan's Jaishawn Barham was called for unsportsmanlike conduct for contact with an official. He could have been thrown out, but the Buckeyes still got a first at the 2. They could not punch it in.

Donaldson went up the middle for 1 and 0. On third, Sayin's sneak was ruled a TD after a long delay, but it was rightly overturned upon review. Going for it on fourth, tight end Bennett Christian was flagged for a false start to quash the drive, forcing the three-pointer.

After a U-M punt, Smith made his first catch for 1 yard at 2:26. With a third-and-7 looming, Tate made his first catch, an 8-yarder, for a first down at the OSU 48 with 56 seconds left.

Each team totaled 85 yards after one quarter. The Buckeyes had 48 rushing, 37 passing. The Wolverines ran for 75.

The Buckeyes took a 10-6 lead at 11:44 of the second quarter on a gutsy fourth-and-5 from the U-M 35 on a pass to Smith. Of course, nothing comes easy in The Game, and the play was upheld after a lengthy review. Smith appeared to bobble the ball at the goal line and then stepped out of bounds in the end zone on the right line, which would have been a touchback.

It took 10 plays and 5:49 to go 63 yards.

A key play was Tate making an 8-yard catch to the U-M 40 on third-and-6. On the scoring play, Smith took advantage of one-on-one coverage to beat his man to score – barely.

Back came the Wolverines with a Zvada 49-yard field goal to make it 10-9 at 5:24.

A defensive pass interference on Jermaine Mathews Jr. gave U-M a reprieve on third down to the Wolverines' 37. Bryson Kuzdzal, playing for the injured Marshall, ran for 22 to the OSU 36. After a first down at the 26, the defense stiffened. Kuzdzal gained 1 and lost 5, and a pass went for zero to set up the field goal.

OSU had to start from the 13 following an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty against Miles Lockhart on the fair catch of the kickoff.

Undeterred, a 4-yard pass to Inniss upped the score to 17-9 with 16 seconds left.

Sayin had a pass of 9 to Tate, Kacmarek made a 25-yard reception to the OSU 47. Jackson took off for 16 yards to the 37, and two plays later, he made a grab for 5. Inniss got a reception for 8 to the 24, and Jackson added another 9 on a catch to the 15 with 1:58 remaining. Jackson rushed for 12 on two plays but then lost a yard to set up third-and-3 from the 4 with 20 seconds left before Inniss scored on a slant pattern.

Ohio State totaled 221 yards (145 passing, 76 rushing) by halftime. Michigan gained 124, 108 of it on the ground. Sayin was 13 of 17 for 145 yards, and Jackson rushed for 77 yards on 12 carries.



SONNY BROCKWAY

GAME-BREAKER — A 50-yard touchdown pass from Julian Sayin to an open Carnell Tate in the third quarter increased an eight-point halftime lead to 24-9 and all but sealed Ohio State's first win in the rivalry game since 2019.

Second-Half Beatdown

Ohio State received the second-half kickoff, and Lorenzo Styles Jr. returned it 16 yards to the 21. The Buckeyes recorded two first downs but had to punt for the first time from the U-M 45, and Joe McGuire put it into the end zone.

Underwood immediately threw 26 yards to the 46. Hudson Hollenbeck later did a big-time shank and punted the ball 11 yards to the OSU 43. Two plays and 45 stunning seconds later, it was 24-9 on a 50-yard TD down the middle to an open Tate, who had opened the drive with a 7-yard catch.

Ohio State coach Ryan Day praised Tate and Smith for their efforts to play.

"If you really knew how much work they put in to get on the field and how gutsy they are, I'm sure the fans and everybody would appreciate what they did in going out there and putting it on the line," the coach said.

Michigan tried to battle back. Donaven McCulley had a 14-yard catch, and on third-and-8 from the U-M 41, Davison Igbinosun was penalized for 15 yards to the OSU 44, but Michigan had to punt, and OSU began from the 14 with 5:06 left in the third quarter.

Sayin picked up a second first down of the drive with a quarterback push for 2 yards to the OSU 34 and later scrambled for 3 yards on third down for another chain mover to the OSU 44 to end the third quarter with the Buckeyes rushing 12 times for 41 yards while U-M's four carries in the quarter went for zero yards.

Looking at third-and-2 from the U-M 48, Jackson burst left and gained 13. Two plays later, Isaiah West ran for 14 to the 22, and

Jackson came back with a 9-yarder. On third down, needing a yard, Sayin bulled his way for 2 and a fresh set of downs at the 11. Donaldson ran for 5 and 1, but an incomplete pass to Kacmarek brought in Fielding for a 23-yard field goal to make it 27-9 with 8:10 to play as the light snow continued to fall.

The Buckeyes used 20 plays, 16 of them runs, and overpowered the Wolverines while chewing up 11:56.

Michigan punted it back, where OSU started from the 29 after a holding penalty. The Buckeye gained 17 yards on seven plays but, more importantly, consumed 3:33.

The Wolverines turned it over four plays later on an Igbinosun interception at the U-M 37. He was assessed 15 yards for taking off his helmet in celebration. Starting from the OSU 48, Donaldson gained 2, 3, and 6 before Sayin lost 2 by taking a knee at the U-M 43 to end the game.

Notes

OSU finished with 419 yards with 186 rushing on 47 attempts (4.0 average). Michigan had 100 rushing yards on 24 carries (4.2), and Underwood was 8 of 18 for 63 yards and a pick. Of U-M's 163 yards, 48 came on the opening drive. ... OSU held the ball for 23:40 of the second half when they had 40 plays compared to 18 for the Wolverines. ... Donaldson gained 44 yards on 14 rushes, and West picked up 20 on six tries. ... Tight end Max Klare made three catches for 20, and fellow TE Kacmarek collected 30 yards on two receptions. ... Sonny Styles led the Buckeyes with six tackles (three solo), and Kenyatta Jackson Jr. had the lone sack of the game for 8 yards.

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 27, Michigan 9

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on what it means to win The Game and the toughness of his players in the rivalry game: "Well, I'm happy for our players. I'm happy for the coaches, all the fans who were at the game. It was great to see all the fans stay all the way towards the end and cheer on our team, and hearing the O-H-I-O (chant) right here in the stadium. It was a great moment for our players. They deserve it. They worked hard. I thought they played really well and were strong and physical in this game. But again, the fans, even those who weren't here, they'll be able to wear that Block 'O' and stand a little prouder. So that means a lot to me, it means a lot to the coaching staff, to the players and my family."

Ohio State senior linebacker Sonny Styles on his happiness for Day after the victory: "I'm so happy for him. Coach Day is an amazing leader. He's an amazing coach. I think a lot of people have stuff to say about this game when it comes to him, and I think he proved a point today."

Ohio State redshirt-freshman quarterback Julian Sayin on knowing how important The Game is, and what it was like celebrating with OSU fans after the win: "It was awesome. When I first got here, I was taught the tradition of this game and what it means to the state of Ohio. We definitely wanted to take it routine-based and one week at a time. We knew this was coming, and it was awesome to have our fans out there. We ended up clearing out the stadium and having all red out there."

Day on what winning The Game means to him and the resilience of Ohio State: "To see the joy in everybody's face is really what this thing is all about. That's what being a head coach is. It's not about raising trophies, and it's not about winning games. It's about pouring back into the people that are around you. When I say people, it's the players, it's the coaches, it's their families and the fans, and that's what it is. Winning just gives us an opportunity to continue to make an impact. I think the fans and all of our supporters can recognize all the work that gets put in. When it didn't go the right way, nobody wavered. We hung in there. It isn't easy. Nothing about this profession is easy, but I'm proud of the men that we have and happy that they got this win."

Day on if his players truly understood the magnitude of The Game and Ohio State's excitement for what is to come: "They have phones, and they read things and hear things, so they know how important this is. This is the No. 1 goal of our program. To get this one checked, it gives us an oppor-



SONNY BROCKWAY

A DAY'S WORK — Redshirt-freshman quarterback Julian Sayin, shown here with retiring Ohio State Associate Sports Information Director Jerry Emig, had never played in snow before, being from California, but he had no problem handling the elements or Michigan in the 27-9 victory.

tunity to get the No. 2 goal, and that's in Indianapolis (Dec. 6 against Indiana). They were already fired up about that in the locker room."

Michigan head coach Sherone Moore on what caused Michigan to lose The Game and what the Wolverines must do to improve going forward: "Obviously, I'm very disappointed in the result. Credit to them and how they played and how they executed. We did not execute to our standards. We started off fast. I thought we started off with good rhythm offensively. Defensively, we held them to a big goal-line stand, held them to field goals, but we didn't execute in the red zone, which ended up being the story of the game. Then, in the second half, not being able to get a rhythm offensively (hurt us). They did a good job. Credit to them. There's no excuse for it. We've got to be much better. They outplayed us today. We've got a lot to work on."

Ohio State senior defensive end Caden Curry on the growth of the defensive line and the statement they feel they made with the win: "We still have that mentality (that we're a bunch of nobodies). Obviously, we kind of know what we've done, and we know what we can continue to do, so we just have to keep having that mentality and keep fighting every day and just getting better every day."

Styles on the defense's goal to not give up any points: "We're mad about every point (we give up). We don't want to give anyone anything."

Styles on if Ohio State wide receivers Carnell Tate and Jeremiah Smith playing brings confidence to the rest of the team: "We knew (Michigan) was kind of trying to figure out if they were going to play or not. But I think we had a lot of confidence. But obviously, having two elite receivers out there helps a lot."

Sayin on what he saw when he threw his interception in the first quarter and what he was thinking at that point in the game: "They had a good disguise, and I thought I had Jeremiah singled up one-on-one, so I ended up throwing it out there. The corner was able to come off and make the interception. Our whole mindset in the quarterback room is to stay even-keeled and keep swinging. We knew there was going to be adversity, and we weren't going to let it faze us. Adversity came on the second play of the game. We've got to keep battling. As an offense, that's our whole mindset – just keep battling."

Sayin on if he feels like he has had a calming presence for the offense the entire season: "That's something I have tried to keep consistent throughout the whole season from day one. As an offense, a lot of the guys are very calm. We're not going to get fazed by a little bit of adversity. We're going to keep swinging. It's what (offensive coordinator Brian) Hartline has instilled in us."

Sayin on playing in the snow for the first time: "It was funny. Around the second or third quarter, I was looking around and seeing all the snow coming down. I told some teammates, 'This looks pretty cool. It's pretty fun seeing the snow on the ground.' We practiced and tried to prepare for this weather and get acclimated to it. I think the guys did a great job."

Moore on how the loss hurt him, the fans, and the Michigan program, and how he'll reflect going forward: "I mean, it stings. Everybody stings. It stings for the seniors, stings for the program. When you're in this 24/7, when you're in this for 365 (days a year), this hurts. You work tirelessly to be successful. So it's not just about me, it's really about the kids and all the hard work they put in. So I'll put it on me. I always put stuff on me and self-reflect and see what we need to fix and see what we need to do. But it's got to be better."

The Numbers Game

Ohio State 27, Michigan 9

Nov. 29, 2025 - Michigan Stadium, Ann Arbor, Mich.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
OHIO STATE	3	14	7	3	27
MICHIGAN	6	3	0	0	9

First Quarter

UM – Zvada, 45-yard field goal, 12:37.

UM – Zvada, 25-yard field goal, 9:42.

OSU – Fielding, 24-yard field goal, 4:33.

Second Quarter

OSU – Smith, 35-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 11:44.

UM – Zvada, 49-yard field goal, 5:24.

OSU – Inniss, 4-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 0:16.

Third Quarter

OSU – Tate, 50-yard pass from Sayin (Fielding kick), 7:35

Fourth Quarter

OSU – Fielding, 23-yard field goal, 8:10.

Att. – 111,373

Weather – Snow, 29 F

Team Statistics

	OSU	UM
First Downs	22	9
Rushing	11	3
Passing	10	4
Penalty	1	2
Rushes-Yards	47-186	24-100
Passing Yards	233	63
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	19-26-1	8-18-1
Offensive Plays	73	42
Total Net Yards	419	163
Third Down Efficiency	10-17	1-9
Fourth Down Efficiency	2-3	0-1
Punts-Avg.	2-37.0	4-36.2
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	0-0
Penalties	6-72	1-3
Time of Possession	40:01	19:59

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) – OSU: Jackson 22-117; Donaldson Jr. 14-44; West 6-20; Sayin 4-7; Team 1-(-2). **UM:** J. Marshall 7-61; Kuzdzal 11-38; Underwood 6-1.

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) – OSU: Sayin 19-26-1-233-3. **UM:** Underwood 8-18-1-63-0.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) – OSU: Tate 5-82; Jackson 4-49; Smith 3-40; Kacmarek 2-30; Klare 3-20; Inniss 2-12. **UM:** McCulley 3-46; J. Marshall 1-10; Kuzdzal 2-5; Tonielli 1-2; Klein 1-0.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) – OSU: McGuire 2-37.0-45. **UM:** Hollenbeck 4-36.2-54.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – OSU: Inniss 2-27. **UM:** None.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) – OSU: Styles Jr. 1-16. **UM:** Marsh 1-9.

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

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) – OSU: Igbinosun 1-0. **UM:** Hill 1-0.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) – OSU: Jackson Jr. 1-8. **UM:** None.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) – OSU: Jackson Jr. 2-13; Styles 1-2. **UM:** Rolder 1.5-2; Sullivan 1-1; Curtis 0.5-1; Williams 0.5-1; Pierce 0.5-0.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.) – OSU: Styles 3-3-6; Igbinosun 2-3-5; McClain 3-2-5; McDonald 0-5-5; Curry 2-2-4; Malone 1-3-4; Downs 2-1-3; Styles Jr. 2-1-3; Jackson Jr. 3-0-3; Reese 1-1-2; Smith 1-0-1; Scott Jr. 1-0-1; Pierce 1-0-1; Houston 0-1-1. **UM:** Rolder 6-6-12; Metcalf 3-7-10; Berry 5-3-8; Mangham 5-2-7; Hillman 5-2-7; Sullivan 3-3-6; Pierce 3-3-6; Williams 2-1-3; Benny 1-2-3; Guy 1-1-2; Brandt 0-2-2; Anderson 1-1-2; Bowles 0-2-2; Hill 1-1-2; Payne 2-0-2; Barham 0-1-1; Moore 0-1-1; Young 0-1-1; Etta 0-1-1; Curtis 0-1-1; Taylor 1-0-1; Iwunnah 1-0-1; Marshall 0-1-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME – OSU: Montgomery, Siereveld, Daniels, Hinzman, Tshabola, Sayin, Jackson, Klare, Kacmarek, Smith, Tate, Igbinosun, Styles Jr., Mathews Jr., Downs, Curry, Jackson Jr., Malone, McDonald, Styles, Reese, Inniss, Scott Jr., Bell, Delane, Donaldson Jr., West, Lockhart, Thurman, Alford, Peoples, Pettijohn, Jones, Stover, Pierce, Roker, West, Fielding, Velazquez, McGuire, Ferlmann, Rudzinski, Smith Jr., Van Sickle, Padilla, Terry, Moore, Onianwa, Adolph, Roberts, Christian, Houston. **UM:** Crippen, Guarnera, Sprague, El-Hadi, Frazier, Underwood, J. Marshall, Klein, McCulley, Marsh, Bell, Hillman, Metcalf, Berry, Hill, Moore, Benny, Payne, Pierce, Barham, Sullivan, Rolder, Williams, Mangham, Guy, Brandt, Goodwin, Owusu-Boateng, Anderson, Young, Etta, Bowles, Dotson, Kuzdzal, Curtis, Ka'apana, Sanders, C. Taylor, J. Taylor, Hoffman, Tarr, Efobi, Norton, Gach, Jones, O'Leary, Z. Marshall, Forbes, Prieskorn, Tonielli, Hollenbeck, Iwunnah, Sunderland, N. Marshall, Zvada, Anwunah.

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)	W, 27-9	111,373
Dec. 6	(1) Indiana (2)	8 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	291	149
Rushing	114	64
Passing	154	66
Penalty	13	19
Average Per Game/Rush	171.5	81.7
Average Per Game/Pass	267.0	121.3
Total Offense	5262	2436
Total Plays	768	647
Average Per Game	438.5	203.0
Average Per Play	6.9	3.8
Penalties-Yards	54-509	45-346
Fumbles-Lost	7-3	8-6
Third Down Efficiency	73-130	41-149
Percentage	56%	28%
Fourth Down Efficiency	11-16	9-26
Percentage	69%	35%
Sacks-Yards	30-214	6-39
Time Of Possession Avg.	33:54	26:04

Score								
By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.	
Ohio State	85	134	111	114	0	444	37.0	
Opponents	12	29	23	29	0	93	7.8	

Individual Statistics					
Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Bo Jackson	151	952	6.3	5	64
James Peoples	61	344	5.6	3	49
CJ Donaldson Jr.	89	330	3.7	10	27
Isaiah West	56	306	5.5	2	38
Lincoln Kienholz	11	66	6.0	2	22
Julian Sayin	31	27	0.9	0	12
Jeremiah Smith	2	20	10.0	1	17
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	14	-29	-2.1	0	0
OSU Totals	425	2058	4.8	24	64
OPP Totals	354	980	2.8	4	36

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Julian Sayin	258	327	78.9	3065	30-5	184.9
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	269	343	78.4	3204	31-5	183.8
OPP Totals	174	293	59.4	1456	5-7	102.0

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Jeremiah Smith	72	942	13.1	11	87
Carnell Tate	44	793	18.0	8	57
Max Klare	41	420	10.2	2	39
Brandon Inniss	31	232	7.5	3	29
Bo Jackson	17	187	11.0	1	23
James Peoples	10	50	5.0	0	12
Will Kacmarek	9	120	13.3	2	47
CJ Donaldson Jr.	8	56	7.0	1	14
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	269	3204	11.9	31	87
OPP Totals	174	1456	8.4	5	67

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPRC	FG	PTS
Jayden Fielding	-	53-53	-	-	15-17	98
Jeremiah Smith	12	-	-	-	-	72
CJ Donaldson Jr.	11	-	-	-	-	66
Carnell Tate	8	-	-	-	-	48

Bo Jackson	6	-	-	-	-	36
James Peoples	3	-	-	-	-	18
Brandon Inniss	3	-	-	-	-	18
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	57	57-57	-	-	-	15-17 444
OPP Totals	9	6-7	-	-	-	11-13 93

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Jayden Fielding	6-6	6-7	3-3	0-1	15-17
OSU Totals	6-6	6-7	3-3	0-1	15-17
OPP Totals	5-5	1-2	5-6	0-0	11-13

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Joe McGuire	21	872	41.5	0	55
Nick McLarty	1	45	45.0	0	45
OSU Totals	22	917	41.7	0	55
OPP Totals	63	2842	45.1	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
Davison Igbinosun	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	7	48	6.9	0	23
OPP Totals	5	4	0.8	0	4

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Brandon Inniss	15	175	11.7	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	18	205	11.4	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.	2	116	58.0	1	100
OSU Totals	6	161	26.8	1	100
OPP Totals	16	266	16.6	0	41

Def. Leaders	Solo	Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Sonny Styles	38	30	68	5.0-10	0.5-3
Arvell Reese	31	29	60	10.0-45	6.5-41
Caden Curry	32	21	53	13.5-70	9.0-64
Caleb Downs	34	18	52	5.0-13	1.0-8
Kayden McDonald	25	26	51	8.0-28	3.0-20
Jaylen McClain	35	9	44	0-0	0-0
Payton Pierce	21	20	41	1.5-2	0-0
Davison Igbinosun	21	18	39	0.5-0	0-0
Lorenzo Styles Jr.	16	12	28	1.5-1	0-0
K. Jackson Jr.	15	9	24	10.0-55	5.5-43
Tywayne Malone	10	14	24	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	10	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
Aaron Scott Jr.	6	2	8	1.0-5	0-0
Riley Pettijohn	3	6	9	1.0-1	0-0
Bryce West	6	3	9	0-0	0-0
Leroy Roker	5	2	7	0-0	0-0
C.J. Hicks	2	4	6	1.0-1	0-0
Jason Moore	1	5	6	1.0-1	0-0
TJ Alford	3	3	6	1.0-2	0-0
Garrett Stover	4	1	5	0-0	0-0
Joshua Mickens	1	2	3	0-0	0-0
Logan George	2	-	2	0-0	0-0
Eli Lee	-	2	2	0-0	0-0
Eric Mensah	-	2	2	0-0	0-0
Malik Hartford	1	1	2	0-0	0-0
Carnell Tate	2	-	2	0-0	0-0
Epi Sitanilei	-	1	1	0.5-0	0-0
Jarquez Carter	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Nate Roberts	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Dominic Kirks	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
Joey Velazquez	-	1	1	0-0	0-0
James Peoples	1	-	1	0-0	0-0
Jeremiah Smith	1	-	1	0-0	0-0

Media Reacts To OSU's Victory Over U-M

By **SAM CIPRIANI**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Behind a complete performance on both sides of the ball, Ohio State overpowered Michigan 27-9 at the Big House on Nov. 29 to reclaim bragging rights in The Game.

The Buckeyes' balanced offensive attack totaled 419 yards of total offense, and their suffocating defense held the Wolverines to just 163 yards overall, snapping Michigan's four-game win streak in the rivalry and delivering a decisive road victory.

The win completed Ohio State's first 12-0 regular season since 2019 and secured the roster its first pair of gold pants.

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day now improved his record to 2-4 against Michigan with the victory, marking his first win in the rivalry since the 2019 season and setting his program up for a Big Ten Championship Game matchup against Indiana at Lucas Oil Stadium on Dec. 6.

Here are some reactions from the media across the country about Ohio State's win in Ann Arbor:

"As much as Ohio State wanted to treat (Nov. 29) as a normal game, the reality is that nothing is normal about this rivalry.

"Day, who had lost to Michigan four years in a row, knows that. Winning like this after the long losing streak is the type of result that can allow the entire program to exhale as it prepares for a run at a second consecutive national championship.

"Ohio State always had more to play for than a pair of gold pants and rivalry bragging rights, but winning this game not only gives Ohio State a Big Ten title game appearance, but it offers players, coaches and fans peace of mind after last year's title run was tagged with 'lost to Michigan.'

"Now the Buckeyes will enter the postseason without the distractions and frustrations associated with another loss to Michigan. The only thing on Ohio State's mind is finishing off an undefeated season. Day is already a national champion, and now he can take aim at entering another stratosphere."

— **Cameron Teague Robinson**
The Athletic

"There were issues galore for the Maize and Blue, with multiple shortcomings demonstrated by the domination delivered by the visitors from the south.

"But the most glaring? The passing game.

"Ohio State's Julian Sayin, a redshirt freshman, showed why he could be attending the Heisman Trophy ceremony in December. The first-year starter went 19 for 26 for 233 yards, three touchdowns and one interception (on his second offensive play).

"Michigan's freshman didn't fare nearly as well. Bryce Underwood – the local five-star talent with an eight-figure NIL deal – completed just 8 of 18 passes for 63 yards and an interception.

"Indeed, Underwood has been held to a high standard – almost impossibly so – for much of the season. And that's despite history arguing against success, with virtually no true freshman starring in his first campaign."

— **Tony Garcia**
Detroit Free Press

"On (Nov. 29) Day proved he could beat Michigan as he led Ohio State to a 27-9 victory over the Wolverines in Ann Arbor. And the Buckeyes won it in the way Day's teams were accused of being unable to win games. While there were plenty of fireworks through the air, including a 35-yard touchdown pass from Julian Sayin to Jeremiah Smith and a 50-yard touchdown pass from Sayin to Carnell Tate, the Buckeyes put the game away by running the ball and stifling their opponent on defense, showing plenty of old-fashioned toughness on a cold, snowy day in Ann Arbor.

"With his first victory in The Game since his first season as Ohio State's head coach in 2019, Day checked the final box needed to firmly establish himself as one of college football's elite coaches."

— **Dan Hope**
Eleven Warriors

"Michigan was supposed to be the end for Day.

"Last season's loss was supposed to be the final blow to an era filled with so many problems, only to have nothing tangible to show for it.

"Instead, it might've created a monster the rest of the sport now has to deal with. That started with a 2024 College Football Playoff run that's never been seen before, continued with a dominant start to the 2025 season, and now he's gotten this monkey off his back by convincingly beating the Wolverines.

"Up next is a return to Indianapolis to face Indiana for a chance at a Big Ten title for the first time since 2020. Then comes the playoffs, where the Buckeyes could come out on the other side as the first 16-0 team in the history of college football, and the third team to win back-to-back uncontested titles in the past 25 years, joining Alabama (2011-12) and Georgia (2021-22).

"This time last year, Day's program was at its lowest point, and it's since gotten off the mat with a vengeance.

"Now it's on the verge of making history as it continues its mission toward being the unquestioned top program in college football."

— **Stephen Means**
Cleveland.com

"Concerns about Ohio State's physicality should be far in the past, but if there were any remaining detractors, Ryan Day and his squad certainly silenced them (on Nov. 29). The Buckeyes asserted their will on both sides of the ball after their shaky start.

"Quarterback Julian Sayin and Ohio State's passing attack stole the headlines, but the Buckeye offensive line did the yeoman's work. Michigan went the entire game without a sack, and the Wolverines managed just one pressure, which meant that Sayin had a clean pocket to operate with the majority of the time.

"Ohio State's line also made plenty of holes in the run game. Running back Bo Jackson carried the ball 22 times for 117 yards while averaging a brisk 5.3 yards per carry. The Buckeyes had 110 of their 186 yards rushing in the second half as they wore Michigan down.

"On the other side of the ball, Ohio State held Michigan to just 100 yards rushing – its

worst performance on the ground of the season. That kind of dominance along the line of scrimmage could carry Ohio State far in the postseason."

— **Will Backus**
CBS Sports

"The Ohio State losses spanned the spectrum of misfortune. It started with that 42-27 romp (in Ann Arbor) in 2021 that launched Michigan into its playoff era, going to three straight and winning the last of them. The '22 game was a second-half whiplash affair, with the Wolverines unleashing big run after big run to rip the game away from the Buckeyes in a shocked Horseshoe. In '23, with (former Michigan head coach Jim) Harbaugh suspended as part of l'affair Stalions, Michigan out-executed Ohio State in a tense battle.

"And then there was last year, a full-system failure as 18.5-point favorites against a middling Michigan team. Day and offensive coordinator Chip Kelly coached an abysmal game, outsmarting themselves and playing into the hands of the Wolverines. That one ended with the home crowd booing the Buckeyes off the field.

"At that point, it looked like the rivalry had consumed Day, chewing him up and spitting him out a broken coach. But then Ohio State had the all-time regroup, taking their playoff opportunity and turning it into a slash-and-burn march to the national title. The Buckeyes haven't lost since.

"At one point, it seemed like Harbaugh would never win this game as a head coach, losing his first five tries. Then it seemed like Day would never find his way back to the winning side after capturing his first one. But nothing lasts forever in a rivalry of this magnitude, even if it feels like it when you're losing."

— **Pat Forde**
Sports Illustrated

"Emotions always run high during The Game, but this edition of the rivalry was the chippiest in at least 30 years. It felt like players squared off on every other play, and there was more shoving than arguing brothers.

"Five unsportsmanlike penalties dotted the first half, and another was waved off by a player 'embellishing' the contact.

"Fortunately, things mostly simmered during the second half.

"No question the animosity between the teams has elevated in recent years, in part because Michigan has reversed the trend of losing every year, and also because of the Connor Stalions cheating scandal. And it's a shame. Ohio State-Michigan has never been a hugfest, but it always was one of the cleanest-played games of the season. As much as the Scarlet and Gray has little use for the Maize and Blue, there existed a grudging respect. Let's hope that still exists."

— **Rob Oller**
The Columbus Dispatch

"Until Ohio State head coach Ryan Day can reel off several consecutive victories over the Wolverines, leveling his all-time record against The Team Up North, images of his frozen posture following the 2024 meltdown will continue to circulate on social media. Stunned by his team's inability to dispose of a subpar Michigan squad – one that played

without a competent quarterback and finished the season 8-5 overall – Day stood motionless on the turf at Ohio Stadium as an ugly fracas unfolded around him. It was the unquestioned nadir of Day's tenure, especially when juxtaposed with the national championship he'd win less than two months later.

"And while hoisting that final trophy certainly represented a capstone of sorts within Day's career, every head coach at Ohio State is expected to dominate the rivalry with Michigan, to ensure that the Big Ten runs through Columbus rather than Ann Arbor or anywhere else. He simply had to beat the Wolverines this time around to avoid becoming the first Buckeye coach to lose five straight rivalry games since John W. Wilce from 1922-27.

"So much about the nature of (this year's) game must have pleased Day, who cracked a smirk when he walked onto the field long before kickoff to choruses of negativity from early-arriving Michigan fans. His stunning stable of wide receivers carved up the Wolverines' secondary. His rebuilt offensive line dominated the line of scrimmage to give quarterback Julian Sayin plenty of time and carved massive rushing lanes for tailback Bo Jackson, who finished with 117 yards on 22 carries. His defense was physical at the point of attack and bothered Michigan quarterback Bryce Underwood enough to hold the Wolverines to just 63 yards through the air.

"Not only had Day begun to tilt the rivalry back toward Ohio State's favor, but he'd done so in resounding fashion and earned himself a trip to the Big Ten Championship Game along the way."

— **Michael Cohen**
FOX Sports

"Despite facing a Wolverine defense that ranked in the top 10 nationally in rushing yards allowed per game, the Buckeyes weren't discouraged from running the ball. After emphasizing that the team that runs the ball better wins this rivalry game over the last four years, Day did not mention this more-than-two-decade-old statistic in the build-up to this season's game. It's interesting that the Scarlet and Gray out-rushed the Maize and Blue for the first time since 2019 – 186 to 100 – ending a four-game losing streak to Michigan.

"Out of Ohio State's 47 rushing attempts, eight gained 5 yards or more, while three went for 10 or more yards. Jackson matched Michigan running back Jordan Marshall for the longest run of the game at 36 yards. After leading 17-9 at halftime, the Buckeyes controlled the game on the ground in the second half with 31 carries for 110 yards.

"There were signs that the Scarlet and Gray had improved at running the ball recently, averaging over 215 rushing yards in the last three games. However, that came against the Big Ten's three worst rushing defenses.

"The Wolverines were expected to present a different challenge. However, the Buckeyes continued to rely on their running backs to break tackles, make defenders miss and gain yardage."

— **Pat Murphy**
247Sports

2022 Class Waits Turn To Cement Legacy

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State's 2021 recruiting class was one of the finest accrued by head coach Ryan Day and his staff. Including such five-star recruits as defensive ends JT Tuimoloau and Jack Sawyer, wide receiver Emeka Egbuka, offensive lineman Donovan Jackson and running back TreVeyon Henderson, the 2021 class was loaded with talent.

Under the leadership of those multiyear starters from the 2021 class, Ohio State had 11-win seasons in both 2022 and 2023. Still, all of those players failed to beat Michigan or achieve any postseason success in their first three seasons with the Buckeyes. The late-season failures sustained by those Buckeye teams provided enough motivation for each of those Buckeyes to return for their respective senior seasons.

Although the presence of Egbuka, Jackson, Henderson, Sawyer and Tuimoloau on the 2024 team helped Ohio State achieve its first national title in a decade, it also meant many members of the less-heralded 2022 class had to wait even longer to get on the field.

But those seniors who have stayed have been a substantial part of a very successful season. After losing all of those seniors, who were so synonymous with the 2024 team's success, the 2025 team, led by fourth-year players such as defensive ends Caden Curry and Kenyatta Jackson Jr. and linebacker Sonny Styles, has taken the Buckeyes to heights the class of 2021 never did.

Not only did the Buckeyes beat Michigan for the first time since 2019 on Nov. 29, but they also became the first team to go 12-0 during the regular season since the 2019 team did so.

"It definitely feels really good to come up here and physically dominate them like we did," Curry said. "I feel like we have more on the table and we have so much more to prove. This team has such a great story."

Good Comes To Those Who Wait

The 2022 class personifies the saying that good things come to those who wait. The players who have stuck with Ohio State during their time on the bench, such as Jackson and Curry, are now thriving in the spotlight.

However, many others have not lasted nearly as long as those current Buckeyes. In fact, 13 of the 21 players in the 2022 class have been transferred out of the program.

"It's kind of sad," said starting center and fourth-year Buckeye Carson Hinzman about the 2022 class on Nov. 19. "You miss all those guys from the dorms or from your freshman year. It seems like it's gone by pretty fast, but that's the way football is nowadays. It's just interesting to see how everyone moves around and finds their own spot."

Although that level of turnover was certainly not what Day and Ohio State's assistant coaches would have hoped for when they signed the class, those who stayed in Columbus became even closer, according to Curry.

"We definitely kept a strong connection together, because we knew we were some of



SONNY BROCKWAY

NOT DONE YET — Beating Michigan accomplished one goal for class of 2022 recruits linebacker Sonny Styles (0) and defensive end Kenyatta Jackson Jr. (97). Next on the list is winning Ohio State's first Big Ten title since 2020 followed by becoming the first repeat national champions in program history.

many," Curry said in September. "I feel like the ones who did stay and the ones that are here, we definitely love each other, and it's definitely a bond that we'll have forever, because we're so tight."

That message was echoed by Hinzman, who easily could have left the program like many others did after the Buckeyes brought in eventual Rimington Trophy winner Seth McLaughlin before last year. Instead, Hinzman stuck it out to become one of Ohio State's better offensive linemen this year.

"I couldn't see myself in any other place than Columbus," Hinzman said. "I love it here. My family loves it here. It's been a great opportunity to come down and compete and play for the national championship. I think the guys who stayed out here, stuck it out feel the exact same way. Especially growing that bond together, because we've been through the same adversity together. I think that's what makes it a lot closer of a class."

Stuck behind Sawyer and Tuimoloau in the depth chart for multiple years, Jackson didn't earn much playing time in his first three years as a Buckeye. This year, though, he has made the most of his opportunity to be a starter. Jackson logged a career-high 24 total tackles and 5½ sacks in the regular season.

But perhaps no player has been more of

a success story from the 2022 class than Curry. The man who shared the bench last year with Jackson flashed his potential throughout the 2024 campaign, making plays on special teams and during his limited reps on defense. Curry finished the 2024 season with 22 total tackles and 2½ sacks and even had a blocked punt.

This year, though, Curry has fully lived up to that potential. The senior has totaled 53 tackles, the third most on the team, and has nine sacks, which is not only a team high, but also tied for the 13th most in the country.

"He's playing himself into one of the better players in Ohio State history here on defense in terms of week-in, week-out showing up and making plays," Day said of Curry on "The Ryan Day Show" on Nov. 26.

Curry saved perhaps his best performance as a Buckeye for Senior Day. In Ohio State's 42-9 win over Rutgers, Curry had a team-high six total tackles and two sacks, his second-highest total of the season.

On one play in the third quarter, Curry came off the edge and made contact with Rutgers quarterback Athan Kaliakmanis right as he was about to pass the ball. Curry forced a fumble and recovered the ball at the 1-yard line.

After the game, Curry was proud to have

played so well in his last game at Ohio Stadium.

"To go out strong, it definitely means something (to me)," Curry said. "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."

Before his impressive Senior Day performance, Curry credited his coaches for helping him grow so much during his time in Columbus.

"It's definitely a whole book. It's crazy. With Coach Mick (Marotti), he truly turned me into the person I am today — just like (with) leadership, mentality," Curry said. "It's everything I would have never thought I would have turned into. Coach Day, pushing me every day; (defensive line coach Larry) Johnson making sure I take every little detail into account."

Others in the 2022 recruiting class didn't have to wait so long to get on the field. Offensive lineman Tegra Tshabola was made a starter at right guard at the beginning of last year.

Although it hasn't always been perfect for Tshabola, whom the Buckeyes have rotated in and out of the lineup this season, he was a stabilizing force on a line that dealt with plenty of injuries last year. Despite some issues with consistency this year, Tshabola has started in every game.

Styles is another player who made an impact earlier than most in his class. If Styles isn't the best player in the class, he certainly is the face of it.

Styles, who came into Ohio State as a safety, started as soon as his sophomore year, before moving to linebacker before last season. He won a position battle there, starting over fellow 2022 five-star C.J. Hicks, and hasn't looked back since.

In addition to being an All-Big Ten linebacker last year, Styles stepped up as a leader off the field. So when senior linebacker Cody Simon ran out of eligibility after last year, Styles was an easy choice to be a team captain and the team's "Block O" recipient.

Unlike many of the others in the class, Styles had a legitimate decision to make regarding the NFL draft after his junior season. As someone who started every game last year for Ohio State's loaded defense and possesses elite athletic traits, Styles likely would have heard his name called at some point in last year's draft, but instead he decided he wanted to spend one more year in Columbus.

"It's probably the best thing for me to do," Styles said less than a week after Ohio State's national championship victory last year. "I think I wasn't ready to leave yet. I still have some more stuff to work on, get better at, some more stuff to prove with this team."

It's hard to argue with Styles' decision. The five-star linebacker is the team's leader with 68 total tackles.

Not every player from the 2022 class who has stayed at Ohio State has been a success.

Hicks started as a linebacker and was originally Ohio State's highest-rated player in the class, according to 247Sports' composite rankings. In three years at linebacker, Hicks failed to make an impact, and after

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

losing a position battle at the Will linebacker spot last year, he moved to defensive end. That move didn't work out very well for Hicks, who decided to redshirt this season after playing in four games.

It's unclear if Hicks has any future with Ohio State, and if he transfers out, it will be hard to deny his time in Columbus was a disappointment.

Seniors Still Hungry For More

One thing the 2025 team has done since the conclusion of the 2024 season is differentiate itself from its predecessor. The leaders of the 2025 team asked Day to have some of the national championship memorabilia removed because they felt like their team hadn't accomplished anything.

"They realized, 'We didn't win a national championship. Last year's team did,' " Day said in the spring. "That was a good start because that's the right mentality to have. We've got to start this thing from scratch and go from there."

That approach has worked for the Buckeyes. In addition to defeating every team it faced in the regular season, Ohio State never played down to its competition.

The Buckeyes defeated each Big Ten opponent they faced by at least 18 points and outscored their opponents by an average of 29.2 points per game, which is one of the best marks in the country.

Ohio State's dominance had it ranked at No. 1 in the AP poll since it defeated Texas in week one. The Buckeyes have been national championship favorites for weeks and have several players up for national awards.

None of that has gotten to the heads of the Buckeyes, though, because as Hinzman pointed out, they're not satisfied with what they've accomplished.

"We're not really satisfied. We've never been to a Big Ten championship before, so

for us to be able to have that edge of we've never really done anything with this team in any aspect, we don't have any hardware," Hinzman said. "We haven't done anything besides (winning) the (Illibuck) turtle, but having the edge about us and wanting to go and prove something for ourselves is big for us."

Ohio State finally did win something when it defeated Michigan. The Buckeyes picked up a win over the Wolverines and a pair of gold pants, which have become hard to come by over the last few years, but don't expect this team to get complacent any time soon.

Ohio State still has its sights set on a conference title, which the program hasn't captured since 2020.

Regardless of what happens in Indianapolis, the Buckeyes have no doubt wrapped up a spot in the College Football Playoff, where they will attempt to repeat as national champions for the first time in program history. The weight of that accomplishment is not something that is lost on Styles.

"Obviously, we know we're going to play better teams the longer the season goes," Styles said. "We have to understand that, and make sure we are staying on top of our stuff. Hopefully, we can achieve all our goals this year and be the first Buckeye team to go back-to-back."

Perhaps as important as the chance to win more hardware is that the seniors simply want to keep playing together.

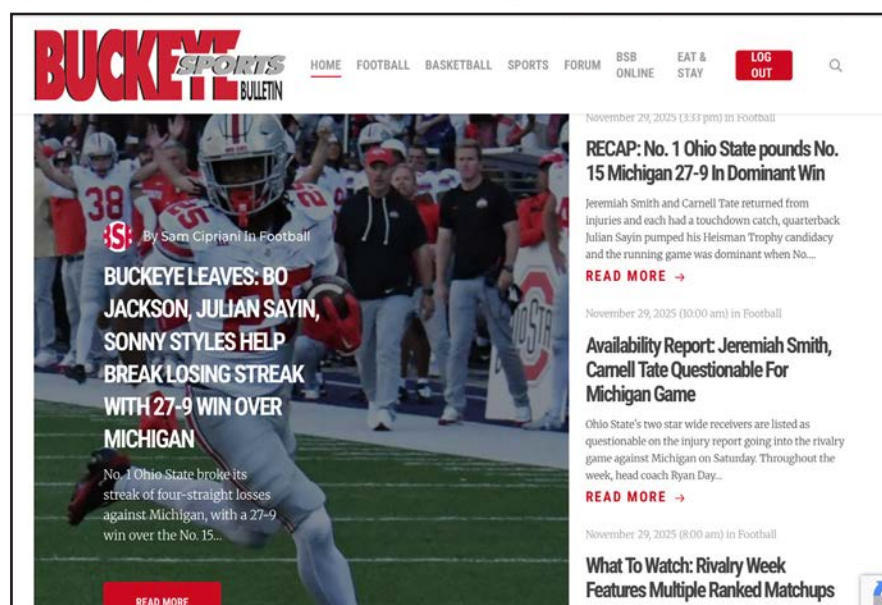
"Our class, or what's left of it, has gone through a little bit of adversity," Hinzman said. "To just be remembered as a great class, I gave everything I had to the program, and hopefully, walking away with some hardware of our own would be special."

"The kind of mentality I had last year going into the playoffs, where it's kind of like I want to spend one more game with these guys – it starts to become a lot more real when you actually think about the guys that will be gone this next year. Just being able to go there and lay it on the line for each other is important."



Carson Hinzman

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OSU's Styles Finds Footing At Nickel Position

By **SAM CIPRIANI**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State defensive back Lorenzo Styles Jr. has spent most of his football career shuffling between sides of the ball, often struggling to find his own identity on the field.

But after stops at two schools and nearly five years in college, Styles has finally settled into a contributing role with Ohio State. As a graduate student in 2025, Styles' winding path has culminated in a breakout season for the Buckeyes.

Despite a position switch – playing as a wide receiver at Notre Dame to a nickel back in the Buckeye secondary – and injuries that have sidelined him this season, Styles has overcome adversity to claim a starting role at nickel back for Ohio State, emerging as a stabilizing presence and a leader on a defense that ranks among the nation's best.

Styles said his journey has tested his patience and determination at every turn, acknowledging that the hard work and perseverance are finally beginning to show tangible results.

"It was hard. There were ups and downs," Styles said. "But everything is starting to pay off. We have a lot more games to play, and I have a lot more opportunities to become the player I want to be and the player that I set out to be when I came here."

Styles was a four-star prospect coming out of Pickerington (Ohio) Central and was ranked the No. 115 overall player in the class of 2021 and the fifth-ranked player in Ohio.

Unlike the four highest-ranked players in Ohio in the class of 2021 – including defensive end Jack Sawyer – Styles chose not to attend Ohio State, instead committing to Notre Dame in hopes of playing wide receiver.

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said that though the Buckeyes tried to recruit Styles on defense, the Pickerington native was firm in his desire to play on offense.

"We recruited him as a corner to start with," Day said. "He wanted to try wide receiver at Notre Dame. He's come back and said, 'I probably should have listened to you guys in the beginning.' But that's part of his journey."

During his two seasons at Notre Dame, Styles played in all of the Irish's 26 games at wide receiver while starting eight times in his sophomore campaign. He hauled in 54 receptions for 684 yards and two touchdowns, including a 29-yard touchdown catch in the 2022 Fiesta Bowl loss to Oklahoma State.

While Styles was productive at receiver during his first two seasons at Notre Dame, the Irish's wideout room grew increasingly crowded with talent, leaving him feeling he needed a fresh start.

He cited a combination of career longevity, trust in Ohio State's defensive staff and the pull of being closer to home and his brother – then rising-sophomore safety Sonny Styles – that caused him to transfer.

"I really thought about the longevity of my career," Lorenzo Styles said. "I thought it would be at cornerback, and I had a lot of trust in (cornerbacks coach Tim) Walton and what Ohio State does with DBs.



SONNY BROCKWAY

WHERE HE BELONGS — Lorenzo Styles Jr. (3) began his college career as a wide receiver at Notre Dame before transferring after two seasons to join his brother Sonny, a linebacker, at Ohio State. Lorenzo is a defensive back and also returned a kickoff 100 yards for a touchdown against UCLA on Nov. 15.

"I just thought this would be the best fit. Being close to home, my brother is here, that's a plus. But I had to think about the longevity of my career. Playing with Sonny is not necessarily going to get me to the NFL, so I had to think about what was going to be best for me."

Styles' first season with Ohio State, and first as a collegiate defensive back, wasn't exactly the smooth transition he had hoped for.

He played in six games in his first season, primarily on special teams and occasionally at nickel back, but did not record any statistics, as he redshirted while he worked on switching from offense to defense.

Looking back on his early struggles before the 2025 season, Styles reflected on his journey at Ohio State, explaining how the challenges have pushed him to where he is today.

"When I came here, I was seventh on the depth chart. I was nowhere near where I needed to be," Styles said. "I always knew I had the confidence to be able to play defensive back here at a high level. I think it's just going to show. I'm excited to go out and ball this year."

Following the 2023 season, Styles had the opportunity to earn a starting spot for the Buckeyes the following season, with Denzel Burke and Jordan Hancock eligible for the NFL draft. However, both members of the secondary returned, and Styles was relegated to a backup role.

Despite the reserve role, Styles was much more productive in 2024 than the year prior. The 6-1, 195-pound nickel played in all 16 games for Ohio State. He recorded 16 total tackles (10 solo) and broke up four passes while contributing to the Buckeyes' 2024 national championship run. Ohio State clinched the title with a 34-23 win over Styles' former team, Notre Dame.

Following a productive offseason, Styles seized his opportunity over the offseason with Burke and Hancock moving on. Walton said that Styles took a clear step forward in his development during spring camp and throughout the offseason.

"He's been doing well," Walton said on Aug. 19. "He's competing. He's learning. He's growing. He's smart, and he processes the game well. He's a hard worker. He's a student of the game. He puts the time in, and he puts in the extra hours. So his work ethic and his commitment to getting it right have been evident. He's had an outstanding training camp, and he's only going to get better."

Coming into the 2025 season, Styles felt that his work the previous two seasons behind Hancock, as well as gaining an understanding of the Buckeye defense, had prepared him for a starting role. He just had to adjust to the new scheme of defensive coordinator Matt Patricia.

"I already had an understanding from last year, because being Jordan's backup last year, I was doing some of the same things," Styles said. "But honestly, with the new defense, I'm just understanding, trying to learn what that looks like and getting with (safeties coach Matt) Guerrieri. (Patricia) is a great teacher and is always in there with Coach Walton and all of us, helping us learn. We're practicing, but I also do some drills after practice, too, just to hone my skill set."

Styles has started in every game he's been available for this season, making appearances in 10 of 12 contests for the Buckeyes. However, Styles has battled injuries throughout the season, missing both of Ohio State's trips to Illinois and Wisconsin in October.

Even though he has struggled to stay on the field consistently, Styles has racked up a career-high 28 tackles (16 solo) and has add-

ed two pass breakups. He had a career-high seven tackles in the Buckeyes' 14-7 win over then-No. 1 Texas in Week 1.

Sophomore safety Jaylen McClain had high praise for Styles' play early in the season, highlighting the nickel back's versatility in the secondary.

"Lorenzo is a very smart player," McClain said. "He's able to play multiple positions on the field. So that helps us with our flexibility in our defensive scheme."

Styles has also played a major role on special teams for the Buckeyes in 2025, acting as both Ohio State's kick and punt returner at times this season. Though Styles has had only one return as each a punt and kick returner, both return plays were highlight plays.

The first came on a punt return in the third quarter in Ohio State's 42-3 victory over Minnesota, when Brandon Inniss fielded the punt before throwing the ball back to Styles, who raced up the field for 36 yards on the return.

Styles' lone kick return this season broke Ohio State's 15-year drought without a kick-return score, when he returned a kick against UCLA for 100 yards on the score-sheet – although he was at least a yard into the end zone when he fielded the kick – to help the Buckeyes take down the Bruins 48-10 on Nov. 15.

"The kick return was cool, but the best feeling was celebrating with your teammates, most of all my brother," Styles said. "To have my brother there and him being so excited for me, telling me how sweet that play was, it felt great. It's a blessing."

Along with his kick-return score, Styles had another moment to share with his brother on Senior Day against Rutgers. The graduate defensive back expressed what it meant to him to have one last moment with his younger brother in Ohio Stadium.

"I would never have thought me and my brother would be walking on the same Senior Day," Styles said. "But seeing him walk and then just coming together, it's just a blessing. Everything's coming together how it's supposed to be."

Before Senior Day, Sonny Styles – who also switched positions while at Ohio State, moving from safety to linebacker – spoke on Lorenzo's journey.

"At Notre Dame, he was a solid wide receiver, but I think he's happy he made the switch," Sonny said. "I think he's going to end up being an even better player."

When Lorenzo Styles spoke to the media on Nov. 19, he recalled his first conversation with the Buckeye coaching staff, saying he laid out his goals from the start and believes he's finally on track to fulfill them.

"During my first interview when I came here, I literally said I want to be the best player in the country, and I feel like I have the opportunity to do that," Styles said. "It's important to be versatile on the defense, kickoffs, returns and special teams. So I feel like I'm on track to do that. But I've got to do it every single day. You can't just do something one time. You have to do it every single week. (There are areas) on defense I have to clean up and keep getting better. I just have to keep attacking all the goals I want every day."

George Gets His Yards, Then Rests For U-M

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 42-3 win over Indiana on Nov 18, 1995, in Ohio Stadium.

By MARCUS HARTMAN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Consistency was the name of the game when Ohio State took on Indiana on Nov. 18, 1995.

The Buckeyes remained undefeated with a 42-3 win over the Hoosiers to remain in contention for a Big Ten championship and Rose Bowl berth, and Eddie George did his part as usual in his final game at Ohio Stadium.

"I'm happy, but then again it's sad to leave because we're having such a great year," he said. "I have a lot of memories here going back to '92, the people that I've met and the tough games. The fans have been really good to us in the 'Shoe.

"I really haven't had time to reflect on it. I think that's something I'll do probably after the season. When it's all said and done, I'm pretty sure there will be some great memories here – the great win over Washington, the win over Michigan, our first, the time we beat Penn State here."

Steady Eddie got his yards, the Buckeyes took care of business, and they looked ahead to one more big challenge.

'A Hard Work Day'

Among the storylines was the status of Terry Glenn.

Ohio State's star receiver had missed the previous week's win over Illinois because of a shoulder injury, but he wasted no time getting involved against the Hoosiers.

The Columbus native caught a pair of touchdown passes from Bobby Hoying early in the game, and the Buckeyes built a 14-3 lead. Then the sledding got tougher, but Ohio State was able to lean on George and wear down the Indiana defense.

The burly senior scored from a yard out with 2:06 left in the second quarter to make it 21-3, and then he found the end zone again from a yard out late in the third quarter to put the game nearly out of reach at 28-3.

He finished the day with 130 yards on 26 carries, a good day for most but a bit ho-hum one week after he hung a school-record 314 yards on the Fighting Illini the week before in front of a chilly but delirious crowd at Ohio Stadium.

"I never really got into the groove, and a lot of credit goes to their defense," George said. "They did a lot of things to try and stop our running game. I think it took us some time to settle down, stay on our blocks and run the ball. It was a hard work day."

His final appearance in an Ohio State uniform at home ended early, but George said he was fine with that.

"There was no need for me to be in there," he said. "The game was in hand,

and that's a coach's decision. We've got a big game next week. I have to get ready for that one, and my job was done."

Pepe Pearson turned in a strong fourth quarter in George's place, picking up 79 yards on 14 carries for the contest. He scored the last touchdown of the day on an 8-yard run with 5:08 left in the fourth quarter.

Although Glenn returned, the offense still was not whole for the entire game. Hoying was knocked out of the game after a hard hit to the head in the third quarter.

That left Stanley Jackson to take over the offense, but George remained the focal point.

"The whole offensive line and myself knew what we had to do," George said. "We had a sense of urgency. I went over to the offensive line and said we've got to go out there and it's on us now. Bobby went down and he wasn't going to play the rest of the game. We had to go out there and establish the running game."

Jackson finished 4 for 4 passing for 34 yards and threw a 2-yard touchdown pass to Rickey Dudley early in the fourth quarter.

Heisman Race Continues

George's massive game against the Fighting Illini thrust him squarely into the Heisman Trophy race with players such as Nebraska quarterback Tommie Frazier, Northwestern running back Darnell Autry and Florida quarterback Danny Wuerffel – not that he was concerned himself.

"Whatever happens, happens," George said. "I think my family wants me to win it more than I do. But if I don't win it, I think they'll love me the same."

Not surprisingly, his teammates had a different point of view.

"There's no question, he should win the award," linebacker Greg Bellisari said. "It's kind of even funny to think there would even be another candidate. He's done an unbelievable job, not only in the sense that he's gotten great stats and a lot of touchdowns, but just the leadership of this team and where he's taken us and how he's taken our team to the next level."

Hoying also went to bat for George while wondering aloud if Frazier's status as the quarterback of the nation's No. 1 team would prove to be the difference.

"I think it's a great award and I hope Eddie wins it, but it's exposure," Hoying said. "If you get your name out, if the voters see you play, that's kind of what it boils down to now. But everyone remembers who won the Heisman Trophy."

George finished the Indiana game with 1,722 yards on 282 carries for the season. That left him needing 43 yards to break the single-season school record set by Keith Byars in 1984 with Michigan up next, then a bowl game.

"Anytime you're in a team concept, your individual goals will take care of themselves," George said. "I'm just focused on the team and doing my job as a running back. Everybody here has worked too hard for me to be selfish and think about my goals."

He did move past his position coach, Tim Spencer, into second on the career rushing yards list with 3,563 yards in two seasons as a starter.

It all added up to a memorable Senior Day for George, who was warmly embraced by Ohio State fans even as an import from Pennsylvania.

The chants of "Eddie! Eddie!" rang through the Horseshoe at every opportunity throughout the season, but that was not the only place.

"It gives you goose bumps," George said. "Sometimes when they do it in the middle of a play you try not to think about it, but it's overwhelming to have that done to you. Ever since I was a freshman, I've always liked to pump up the crowd. Sometimes you have control over them, I guess. I just get really involved in the game. I want to go out and have fun. These days aren't going to last too long, so I want to

get the most out of them."

Of course, there was one more dragon to slay – or more accurately, a Wolverine.

Though the Buckeyes had finally snapped their six-game winless streak against Michigan the previous season, they had not won in Ann Arbor since 1987.

They also had not won anything yet for the season despite being 11-0. That's because Northwestern finished its campaign a perfect 8-0 in the Big Ten. The Wildcats would be idle while No. 2 Ohio State traveled to Ann Arbor.

"There's not a revenge factor," George said. "We just have to go out and win. If we want to go to the Rose Bowl and fulfill our dreams, this is it. This is what we've been working for. The other 11 games don't mean anything. This is The Game, and everything is riding on it."

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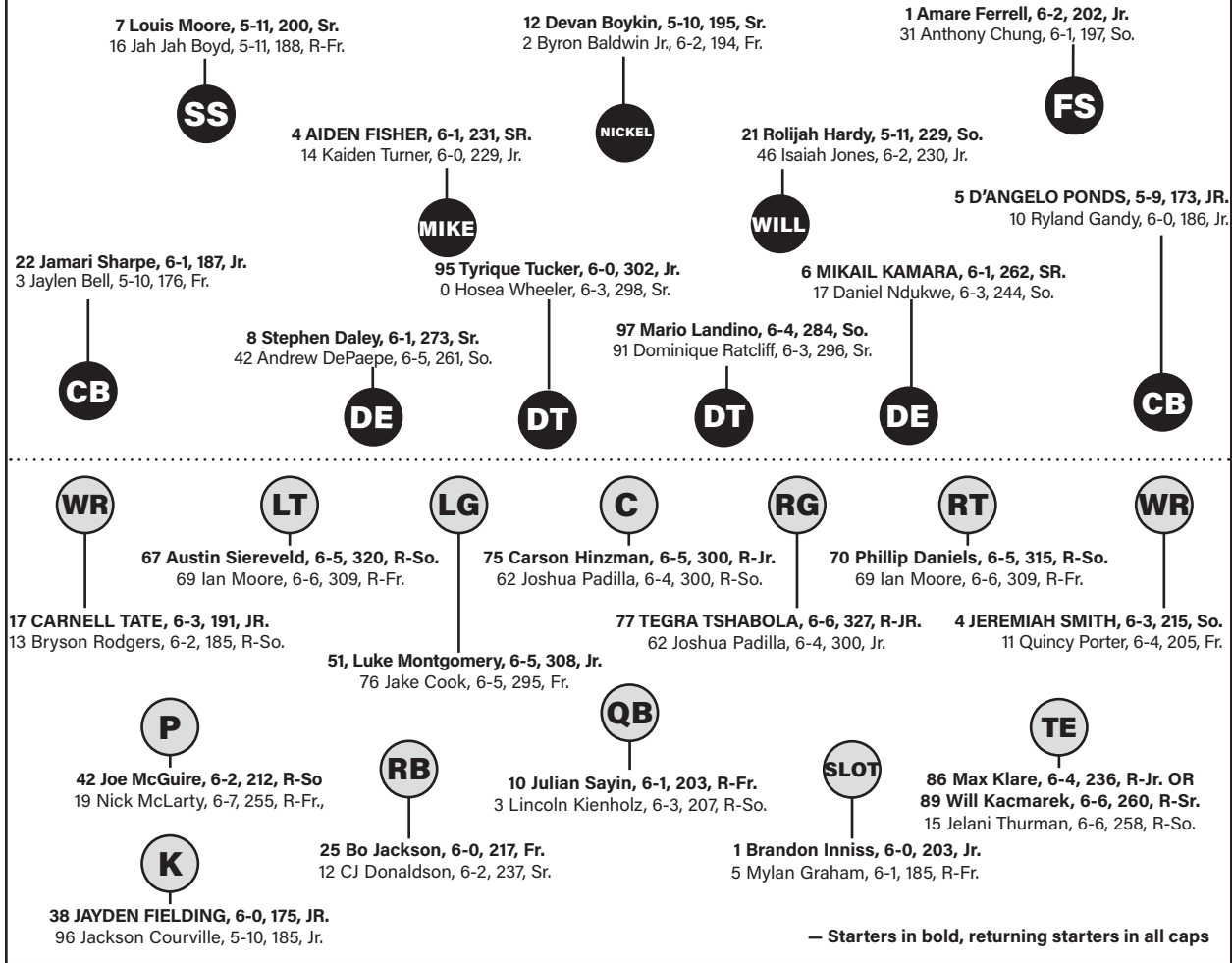
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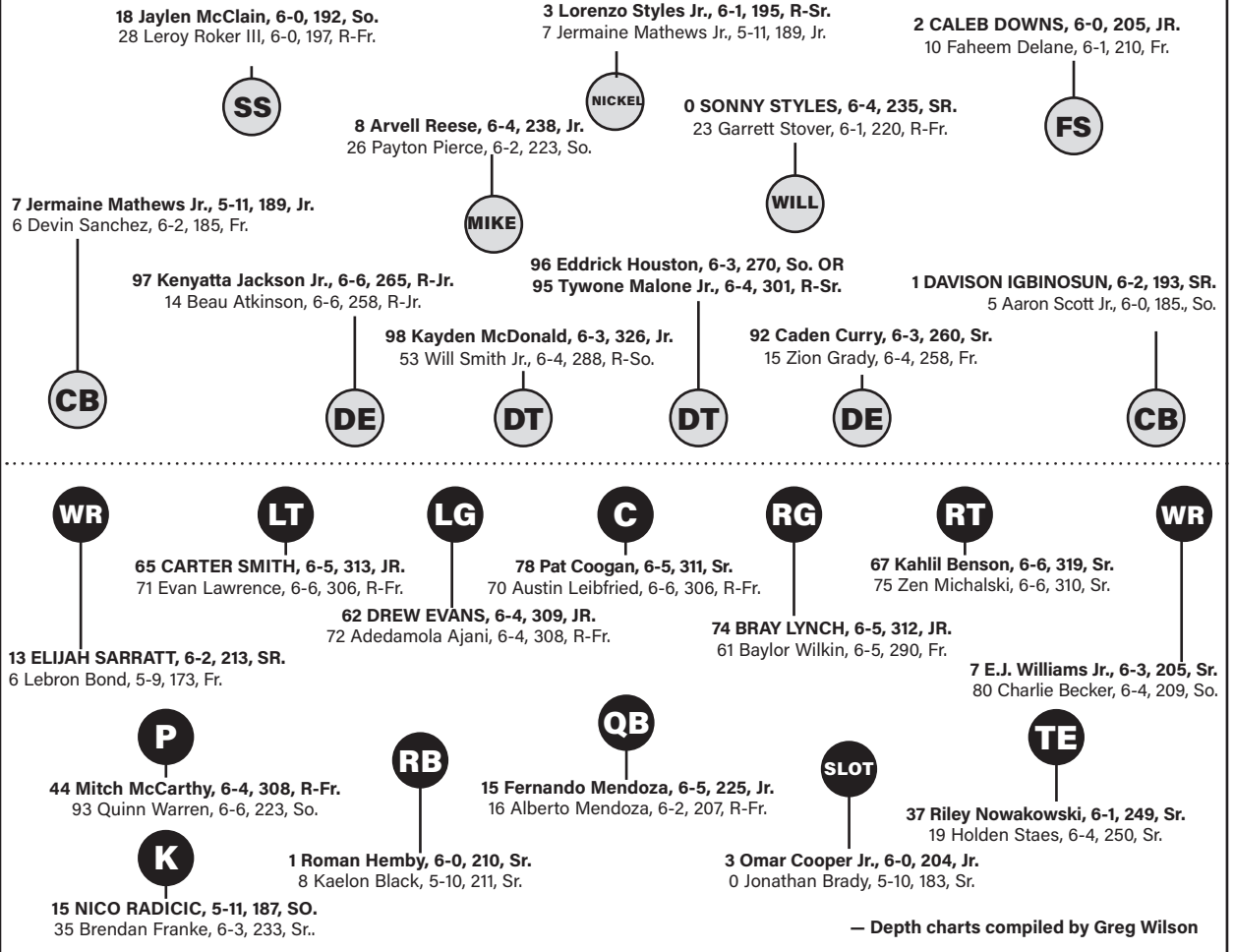


Projected Depth Charts

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



WHEN INDIANA HAS THE BALL...



How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs. INDIANA RUSH DEFENSE

This is shaping up to be a game for the ages. Never before have unbeaten teams played in the Big Ten Championship Game. The top-ranked Buckeyes will be going for their first title since 2020, while No. 2 Indiana is gunning for its first championship since 1967 and first outright since 1945. Not only that, but the Heisman Trophy could be decided between OSU's Julian Sayin and Hoosier Fernando Mendoza. While the attention will be on their aerial exploits, the game could be decided on the ground. The Buckeyes devastated a good Michigan rush defense for 186 yards on 47 carries. While the 4.0 average is not great, what the Buckeyes did in the 27-9 rout of their rival was control the ball and eat up time, having possession for more than 23 minutes in the second half, and the Wolverines could do nothing about it. Freshman Bo Jackson etched his name in Buckeye lore in The Game with 117 yards (5.3 avg.) with a long of 36. CJ Donaldson Jr. provided invaluable short-yardage gains with 14 rushes for 44 yards, and Isaiah West popped a run for 14 yards. Michigan was allowing 94.0 rushing yards to rank 10th nationally. Indiana is even better. The Hoosiers entered their game against woeful Purdue ranked fourth in the nation (82.5) and limited the Boilermakers to 44 yards (1.6) in the 56-3 rout. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

INDIANA RUSH OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Hoosiers had their way against Purdue, rushing for 355 yards on a hefty 9.6 average, led by Roman Hemby's 82-yard dash to the end zone. He merely had a season-high 152 yards on 12 runs (12.7). Kaelon Black scored two touchdowns and rushed for 66 yards (5.1), and Mendoza chipped in with a 7-yard score among his 27 yards (13.5). Indiana had its second-highest rushing total this season and its sixth 300-yard game. The Ohio State rush defense was third heading into The Game, allowing 80.0. While Michigan totaled 100 yards on 24 carries (4.2), 38 came on the first series of the game by Jordan Marshall. Still, the Buckeyes need to be wary of explosive plays by Indiana. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs. INDIANA PASS DEFENSE

Sayin, in his biggest test to date, overcame an interception on OSU's second play to post another efficient game, connecting on 19 of 26 for 233 yards and touchdown passes of 35 yards to Jeremiah Smith, 4 to Brandon Inniss and a beauty of 50 yards to Carnell Tate. It helped that Smith (three catches, 40 yards) and Tate (five for 82) returned from injuries just in time to torment the Wolverines. Now, they get to play indoors at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis instead of the snowy field in Ann Arbor. Indiana was 12th in pass defense (166.5), but Purdue's Ryan Browne threw for 238 yards with a long of 28. He was sacked once. IU defensive back Amare Ferrell has eight career interceptions. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

INDIANA PASS OFFENSE vs. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Mendoza didn't throw much against Purdue because he didn't need to – 8 of 15 for 117 yards and a pair of TDs, including a 43-yarder to Omar Cooper Jr. in three quarters. Mendoza has 32 TD passes this season, and he's had six games where he's had at least one passing and one rushing touchdown. He is the best QB the Buckeyes have faced, and his dual-threat abilities present a problem. Alberto Mendoza, Fernando's brother, had a 65-yard scoring strike late in the Purdue game. OSU did not let Michigan freshman Bryce Underwood get comfortable, and he was 8 of 18 for 63 yards and an INT. **EDGE: INDIANA**

SPECIAL TEAMS

Indiana did not try a field goal against Purdue, and Mitch McCarthy punted four times for a 47.2 average. Jayden Fielding made field goals from 23 and 24 yards, and Joe McGuire's two punts averaged 37.0 yards vs. U-M. **EDGE: EVEN**

INTANGIBLES

Despite being ranked right behind the Buckeyes, Indiana will play up the no respect angle even though the Hoosiers have made a remarkable turnaround in two seasons under the brash Curt Cignetti. Having the game in essentially their back yard will help, but the Buckeyes are used to hostile environments. Of concern is a letdown after a first win over U-M since 2019. The Buckeyes need to be sharper and more disciplined and leave the jawing and shoving out of their game. **EDGE: INDIANA**

STAFF PREDICTION

Indiana has a lot going for it and the Buckeyes haven't always been at their best in the first quarter, but overcoming an early 6-0 deficit against Michigan proved something and that momentum should carry over. The Buckeyes are on a mission. **OHIO STATE 31, INDIANA 17**

Indiana Hoosiers Eye Big Ten Breakthrough

By **GREG WILSON**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

When Curt Cignetti started at Indiana, nobody could have predicted how quickly the Hoosier program – at the time the losingest team in college football history – would turn around.

In his first season in Bloomington, Cignetti finished with an 11-1 regular-season record and made an appearance in the first round of the 12-team College Football Playoff, ultimately losing to eventual national runner-up Notre Dame on the road.

After disappointing losses against the two toughest opponents the Hoosiers faced, they went into the portal and added former Cal quarterback Fernando Mendoza, who has turned into the front-runner for the Heisman Trophy this season.

“He looks very intelligent in terms of his ability to identify pre- and post-snap,” said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on Nov. 30. “He’s accurate, and sneaky athletic. Maybe you don’t look at him as a dual threat, but he makes a lot of plays with his feet and can extend.”

Mendoza has helped lead the Hoosiers to their first-ever 12-win season, going undefeated to make it to the Big Ten Championship Game for Indiana’s first time in this game.

And the improved record has come against what has been an overall tougher schedule, which Cignetti himself thinks is what has earned Indiana more respect this season than it had last year going into the CFP. The marquee win for Cignetti’s program was when they went to Eugene, Ore., to take down Oregon at Autzen Stadium 30-20.

“When we played Illinois, they were No. 9 in the country, beat them 63-10 at home,” he said on Nov. 30. “Then we go to Iowa. That was a great win. Obviously, the Oregon game gave us a lot of credibility. That was a step we had to take as a program – go on the road, play a top-five team in the country and come back with a win.”

Cignetti thinks that part of what helped the Hoosiers get to this point is their single regular-season loss last year, which was to Ohio State in the penultimate week of the season.

The Buckeyes took down Indiana 38-15 at Ohio Stadium, and Cignetti said that his team needed to experience that.

“While that was not an enjoyable experience, it was an experience that was necessary for our growth and development, to go into a hostile environment like Ohio State and play a team of that quality,” he said. “We were able to add some key pieces to this year’s team, some veterans that have played a lot of football and been in those environments. And for the guys that returned from last year’s team, they learned a lot from Ohio State and Notre Dame.”

After last season, which was the best year in Indiana football history, Cignetti’s

improvements this year were enough to earn him an extension that made him then the third-highest paid coach in college football and will keep him in Bloomington through the 2033 season.

But even though the Hoosiers weren’t expected to be here before the season, they are not going to sit back and be happy with what they have accomplished to this point.

“This is such a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity we have ahead of us,” Mendoza said. “We have a lot more that we feel like we can accomplish.”

Both Indiana’s offense and defense have been elite units this season, helping it to the No. 2 spot in the country. The Hoosiers are second in the nation in scoring offense (44.3 points per game), fifth in total offense (483.8 yards per game), second in scoring defense (10.9 points) and fourth in total defense (251.8) going into championship weekend.

So far this year, Mendoza has thrown for 2,758 yards, 32 touchdowns and five interceptions with a 72.0 completion percentage. Cignetti believes Mendoza has gotten much better this season and said there is still likely more that he can improve on.

“The progress he has made in the pocket, really, is unbelievable,” Cignetti said. “But as much progress as he’s made, he’s got that much more he can make because of his build. And he’s the kind of guy, I mean, he’s brilliant. He has super high character. He wants to be a great player, and I’ve never been around a player anywhere I’ve ever been that prepares like him.”

Mendoza, like Ohio State quarterback Julian Sayin, has a great receiver duo that he throws to, with Omar Cooper Jr. and Elijah Sarratt leading the way. Sarratt has missed two games with an injury this season but was healthy for Indiana’s 56-3 win over Purdue on Nov. 28.

Through 10 games, Sarratt has 48 catches for 650 yards and 11 touchdowns, while Cooper has added possibly the best catch of the college football season to his résumé, which helped Indiana beat Penn State on the road with less than a minute to go on Nov. 8.

Indiana also has multiple very good options to run the ball, with Roman Hemby and Kaelon Black leading the way, both of whom have over 700 yards and at least six touchdowns. Khobie Martin and Mendoza both have six rushing touchdowns each, while Hemby has been more of a threat in the passing game than the others, with 13 catches.

“Roman Hemby is a warrior,” Cignetti said in October. “That guy gives 100 percent every day, every play. He’s a physical runner – fast, smart, great hands, great out of the backfield. And he’s a guy that wants the ball, that you can give the ball to and that he’s been durable.”

On the offensive line blocking for those runners will be left tackle Carter Smith, left guard Drew Evans, center Pat Coogan,



Curt Cignetti



Fernando Mendoza

Get To Know ... Indiana

- **2025 Record:** 12-0, 9-0 Big Ten.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Spread; Defensive Formation – Multiple 4-2-5; Starters returning – Offense 4, Defense 2, Specialists 1.
- **Head Coach:** Curt Cignetti, 2nd year at Indiana, 23-2.
- **Series History:** 98th meeting; Ohio State leads 80-12-5.
- **School Facts:** Location – Bloomington, Ind.; Enrollment – 48,626; Nickname – Hoosiers; Colors – Crimson and Cream; Conference – Big Ten; Stadium – Memorial Stadium (Surface – FieldTurf; Capacity – 52,626).

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Roman Hemby	163	866	5.3	6
Kaelon Black	127	729	5.7	7
Khobie Martin	69	453	6.6	6
F. Mendoza	64	243	3.8	6

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
F. Mendoza	211-293	72.0	2,758	32-5

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Omar Cooper Jr.	58	804	13.9	11
Elijah Sarratt	48	650	13.5	11
E.J. Williams Jr.	33	404	12.2	5
R. Nowakowski	23	296	12.9	2

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game – 44.3
Rushing Yards Per Game – 229.8
Passing Yards Per Game – 254.1
Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 483.8

2025 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Aug. 30	OLD DOMINION	W, 27-14
Sept. 6	KENNESAW STATE	W, 56-9
Sept. 12	INDIANA STATE	W, 73-0
Sept. 20	ILLINOIS	W, 63-10
Sept 27	at Iowa	W, 20-15
Oct. 11	at Oregon	W, 30-20
Oct. 18	MICHIGAN STATE	W, 38-13
Oct. 25	UCLA	W, 56-6
Nov. 1	at Maryland	W, 55-10
Nov. 8	at Penn State	W, 27-24
Nov. 15	WISCONSIN	W, 31-7
Nov. 28	at Purdue	W, 56-3
Dec. 6	Ohio State*	8 p.m.

*B1G Championship Game at Lucas Oil Stadium

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Rolijah Hardy	35	41	76	11.5-45	7-37
Aiden Fisher	33	39	72	7-18	2.5-11
Louis Moore	35	33	68	2-3	0-0
Isaiah Jones	27	32	59	12-53	5-36
Devan Boykin	25	20	45	2-3	0-0

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD
Louis Moore	5	41	8.2	0
Amare Ferrell	4	17	4.3	0
Aiden Fisher	2	27	13.5	1
Devan Boykin	2	0	0	0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed – 10.9
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 79.3
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 172.5
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 251.8

right guard Bray Lynch and right tackle Kahlil Benson.

Coogan gave a speech before the win over Purdue, which Mendoza recapped after the game.

“He’s like, ‘Look at us, a bunch of misfits, guys from FCS, G5, (James Madison) coming up, a bunch of transfers, bunch of rejects that got replaced at their old school coming to Indiana, now we have a chance to go 12-0,’” Mendoza said. “It really resonated with a lot of us.”

Now that group of misfits will have a chance to take down the undefeated Buckeyes, who, early on, were favored to win by nearly a touchdown at Lucas Oil Stadium on Dec. 6.

If the Hoosiers hope to pull that off, their defense will have to stop the Buckeye offense that has been one of the most efficient in the country this season with Sayin leading the way.

In the trenches on the defensive side, Indiana has 2024 first-team All-Big Ten edge rusher Mikail Kamara, with transfer Stephen Daley on the other end and interior defensive linemen Tyrique Tucker and Mario Landino in between.

Kamara has dealt with injuries this season as well but also returned against Purdue for the win. Cignetti believes Kamara hasn’t reached his full potential, despite being a third-team All-American last season.

“I think production numbers speak for themselves,” Cignetti said. “I think he’s got another level he can play at, and I’m waiting to see it.”

That defensive line has helped the Hoosiers be the No. 2 rushing defense in the country, allowing just 79.3 yards per game on the ground, which will make them the Buckeyes’ toughest test yet.

At linebacker for the Hoosiers are Rolijah Hardy and Aiden Fisher, who is returning from last season’s team. They lead the team in tackles, with 76 and 72, respectively.

Then, in the secondary, Indiana has Jamari Sharpe and D’Angelo Ponds at cornerback. Ponds went to high school with Ohio State star wide receiver Jeremiah Smith, heading to college one year before the wideout. The two will get the chance to match up against each other for the second straight year.

“I thought he held his own last year,” Cignetti said. “He’s a great competitor and loves football. He doesn’t look like an All-American. He’s not real tall. He’s not real big, but that guy goes a million miles an hour every practice, every game.”

Last season, Smith finished that game with three catches for 34 yards.

At safety will be Louis Moore and Amare Ferrell, with Devan Boykin at nickel back.

Indiana has the opportunity to show that it is here to stay as a powerhouse in the conference with Cignetti at the helm, but first, it will have to get past the Buckeyes, whom Cignetti has a lot of respect for, and he is ready for the challenge.

“Ryan Day is a great coach. He’ll be one of the legends of the game someday,” Cignetti said. “They’re dominant, really everywhere. They have a lot of great players and are very explosive on offense. They have the No. 1-rated defense in America. Special teams are really good.

“We respect Ohio State. They’re a great football team. What they’ve done speaks for itself.”

Three-Star DL McKinley Flips To Ohio State

Ohio State made another addition to its 2026 class when Lafayette (La.) Acadiana three-star defensive lineman Darryus McKinley committed to the Buckeyes on Nov. 26. McKinley flipped from LSU, where he had been committed since Aug. 1. But with the Tigers firing head coach Brian Kelly during the season, the Buckeyes went after McKinley and were successful.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK

Greg Wilson

With the early signing period beginning on Dec. 3, the Buckeyes have nearly solidified their 2026 class.

He is the No. 600 player in the class, the No. 73 defensive lineman and the No. 20 player in Louisiana.

Ohio State offered McKinley on Oct. 30, and the three-star took a visit to Columbus before ultimately deciding he wanted to join the Buckeyes' class.

He is likely the last addition to Ohio State's 2026 defensive line in the recruiting class, but Ohio State has also been trying to flip another defender from a team that also lost its head coach midseason.

The Buckeyes are still going after Winter Garden (Fla.) Windermere four-star cornerback CJ Bronaugh (6-1, 166), who is committed to Florida and has been since June 18.

But once Billy Napier was fired in the middle of the season, Ohio State has been trying to get the No. 110 player in the country to change his decision and head to Columbus. With the early signing period beginning on Dec. 3, the Buckeyes are running out of time to land Bronaugh's commitment, but they will likely keep trying until his name is on a dotted

line for any team.

Brickle Flips To Terps

Ohio State lost one of its defensive line commitments on Nov. 23 when Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy three-star Cameron Brickle (6-2, 305) flipped to Maryland.

His decision came a day after he was in College Park, Md., for a visit when the Terrapins hosted Michigan and lost 45-20. Brickle had been committed to Ohio State since June 28, which was soon after he had taken an official visit to Columbus on May 30.

He took an official visit to Maryland on June 13 but decided over the summer that he would pledge to Ohio State. However, the Terrapins stayed in contact with the three-star and ended up being successful in getting him to flip.

Brickle is considered the No. 572 player in the country, the No. 65 defensive lineman and the No. 71 player in Florida, according to 247Sports' composite rankings.

Defensive line coach Larry Johnson still has six commitments on the line, with Gardena (Calif.) Junipero Serra four-star edge rusher Khary Wilder (6-4, 260); Richland (N.J.) St. Augustine Prep four-star defensive lineman Damari Simeon (6-3, 275); Bessemer (Ala.) City four-star defensive lineman Emanuel Ruffin (6-4, 295); Buford, Ga., four-star edge rusher Dre Quinn (6-4, 228); Cleveland Glenview three-star defensive lineman Jamir Perez (6-4, 360); and McKinley (6-3, 270) in the class.

If all six sign with the Buckeyes, it would be one more than Johnson was able to bring in with the 2025 recruiting class.

OSU Now A Top-Six Class

There have been months of talk about how Buckeye recruiting might have been having a relatively off year.

Ohio State was ranked the No. 9 recruiting class by 247Sports' composite for

OSU Football 2026 Commitments

Player(s) in the class of 2026 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Favour Akih	RB	6-0	190	★★★★	Delaware (Ohio) Rutherford B. Hayes
Legend Bey	ATH	5-11	175	★★★★	North Forney, Texas
Khmari Bing	S	6-0	190	★★★	Baltimore St. Frances Academy
Brock Boyd	WR	6-2	183	★★★	Southlake (Texas) Carroll
Blaine Bradford	S	6-1	207	★★★★	Baton Rouge (La.) Catholic
Landry Brede	OT	6-5	280	★★★	Mentor, Ohio
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
Darryus McKinley	DL	6-3	270	★★★	Lafayette (La.) Acadiana
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	★★★★	Cibola (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

months, and until the beginning of November, when the Buckeyes added eight more commitments – plus Mentor, Ohio, three-star offensive tackle Landry Brede (6-5, 280) and Baltimore St. Frances four-star safety Khmari Bing (6-0, 190) in October – that didn't change.

After those commitments, Ohio State was up to the sixth-ranked class in the country, according to the 247Sports recruiting rankings.

Since head coach Ryan Day took over the program, he has signed a recruiting class inside the top five – other than his 14th-ranked 2019 class when he took over the team right before signing day – each year he has been at the helm.

With the early signing period coming up, the Buckeyes still have some time to secure a spot in the top five this year, and adding Bronaugh to the class would only help.

The five schools ahead of Ohio State are

No. 1 USC, No. 2 Georgia, No. 3 Alabama,
No. 4 Notre Dame and No. 5 Oregon.

National Signing Day, which has become largely irrelevant these days, is not until Feb. 4, 2026.

Four-Star DE Enjoyed Visit

When the Buckeyes held their last home game of the season, a 42-9 win over Rutgers on Nov. 22, Greenwich (Conn.) Country Day four-star defensive end Mekai Brown (6-7, 230) was on campus.

The 2027 prospect talked with 247Sports after he was in Columbus and said he enjoyed his time with the Buckeyes.

"It was great," Brown said. "I spent time with coach Larry Johnson and got to meet coach Ryan Day in person and discuss his values and how they match up with mine. Obviously, the game atmosphere was crazy. There was one fourth down where I literally couldn't even hear myself think."



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ASK AN ANALYST

with Bill Greene of Buckeye Scoop

With the early signing period coming up, there has been a lot of noise around the recruitment of Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei wide receivers Chris Henry Jr. (6-5, 205), a five-star, and four-star Kayden Dixon-Wyatt (6-2, 180), with multiple teams trying to flip them. Do you believe both will end up with Ohio State?

"I do, but it's so different now because of the money. It's almost like Major League Baseball free agency, when things can change at the last second, and somebody gets overwhelmed by a financial offer that they really cannot refuse. I don't see that happening here with either Henry or Dixon-Wyatt, I just don't. I think a lot of it is that Ohio State is very competitive with NIL, and then you've also got to look at Ohio State's track record – if those kids are going to look long-term at what they've done with Emeka Egbuka, Marvin Harrison Jr. and the rest of the crew.

"When you look at everything with Ohio State being financially competitive, they're not going to get blown away by a money offer. Then you look at what, long-term, Ohio State can do for these wide receivers. If it was a different position group, I might be a little concerned, but I think Ohio State is competitive financially, and they would have a huge edge in terms of long-term future, in terms of the NFL. Anything

can happen; it's NIL, it's money. But I would really be surprised if they lost either Henry or Dixon-Wyatt."

The Buckeyes have been trying to flip Florida commit Winter Garden (Fla.) Windermere four-star cornerback CJ Bronaugh (6-1, 166). Do you think they will be able to pull that off before he signs?

"I do. I think they're getting him from everything I've been told. All the uncertainty at Florida right now, I think they're going to get that kid, and I think they want him pretty badly. They've got commitments from five DBs already, but I don't know that any of them are similar to Bronaugh. I think Bronaugh is the guy they need. He can play on the corner. He can play man-to-man. He doesn't need to be on his own, doesn't need to be covered up, doesn't need to be on the slot, although he could play there. I just think he's really valuable to how Patricia wants to play defense. With the uncertainty at Florida, I think they're going to get that kid. I really do."

Lafayette (La.) Acadiana three-star defensive lineman Darryus McKinley (6-3, 270) flipped to Ohio State on Nov. 26. What do you make of him as a prospect?

"I don't have a very good insight on him or info on him. When you look at that kid, I don't think he's

all that good. He's going to sign with Ohio State, but man, is he that good? Is he a guy that LSU is really fighting for? I mean, did they fight to keep that kid? I don't think his film is impressive at all. I think the attraction for a lot of people was just 'Oh my God, we just stole a kid from LSU.' They've got the linemen committed in this class. I just don't see that kid as a difference maker at all. I could be dead wrong. Of all the defensive linemen they've got committed, and they've got a million of them, I would probably rank him at the bottom of those guys or near the bottom of those guys."

Do you think in-state recruiting will be impacted by the OHSAA ruling that allows high school players to profit off their NIL?

"I just don't think that's going to be that big a deal. I really don't. I probably need to look into that a little more, I'm probably behind the times there when it comes to NIL offers for the high school kids and the effect it's going to have on recruiting, I can't see where that impacts a kid that Ohio State wants really bad, that somehow high school NIL is going to cause that kid to go elsewhere and not to Ohio State. I don't know that it impacts Ohio State recruiting. It's going to impact those kids in a lot of ways, but I don't think it impacts Ohio State."

It was that loud. The D-line was on fire. It was crazy."

Brown is the No. 56 player in the country, the No. 6 defensive end and the No. 1 player in Connecticut. His scholarship offer from the Buckeyes came on Sept. 29, which he remembers as a turning point in his recruitment process.

"That's when I knew (my recruitment was taking off)," Brown said. "There were a lot of big programs who were reaching out at the time, but when Ohio State offered, that's when I really knew my life was about to get crazy. Growing up watching the Buckeyes, getting that offer was really surreal."

In his sophomore season, Brown had 36 tackles, seven sacks, two passes broken up and two forced fumbles. While he does come off the edge and has obviously been very effective at it in his high school career, Brown said he has enjoyed watching Arvell Reese since defensive coordinator Matt Patricia has used the linebacker in so many different ways.

"I love Arvell Reese's game," Brown said. "I know he's a linebacker, but he plays edge, and they use him there as well. They see me as being able to move around a lot and utilize my athleticism in that way."

Currently, Brown holds 21 Division I offers, including from Auburn, Florida, Georgia, Nebraska, Ole Miss, Penn State, Tennessee, Texas A&M and USC.

'27 RB Target Dominates

Chattanooga (Tenn.) Baylor School five-star running back David Gabriel Georges (6-0, 205) is no stranger to dominating on the football field, but he took that to the next level in his semifinal game over two-time defending champion McCallie High School.

In the game, Gabriel Georges had 32 carries and took those for 435 yards and seven touchdowns. His eye-popping 13.6 yards per carry helped Baylor win 56-35 and make it to the Tennessee state cham-

pionship, with an 85-yard fourth-quarter touchdown sealing the win.

Four of his touchdowns came in the first half of the game, going for 17, 1, 4 and 33 yards, which allowed Baylor to take a two-score lead into halftime. But he continued his dominant run in the second half to take down the team that had beaten Baylor in the championship the last two seasons.

It wasn't the first time Gabriel Georges had a great performance against McCallie this season. He ran for 280 yards and three touchdowns when the two teams played in the regular season. And in two matchups last year, the five-star ran for a combined 351 yards, a total that could have been higher had he not left last year's championship game with an injury.

Through the win, Gabriel Georges had 1,603 rushing yards and 25 touchdowns on 134 carries, averaging 12.0 yards per tote over the full year.

Ohio State is still one of three teams considered the favorites to land Gabriel Georges, who is in the 2027 class. The Buckeyes are competing with Tennessee and Georgia.

However, On3's Hayes Fawcett reported that Georgia seems to be separating itself from the pack when it comes to the recruitment of McKeesport, Pa., five-star running back Kemon Spell (5-9, 205), who decommitted from Penn State soon before James Franklin was fired.

Spell is the No. 1 running back in the 2027 class, and Gabriel Georges is No. 2, and if Spell commits to the Bulldogs, it would very likely take them out of the running for Gabriel Georges, making it a two-program race for the Baylor School star.

Gabriel Georges is considered the No. 14 player in his class and the No. 1 player in Tennessee.

OSU On More Top Lists

Ohio State made the cut when Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star safety

Isala Aisa Wily-Ava (6-2, 195) narrowed his top schools down to eight.

He included Ohio State along with Hawaii, Michigan, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas A&M, Texas and Washington.

Wily-Ava is considered the No. 232 player in the country, the No. 24 safety and the No. 24 player in California. The last time he was in Columbus was for the Buckeyes' season-opening win over Texas on Aug. 30

The 2027 prospect had 72 tackles, two tackles for loss, one sack, four passes broken up and seven interceptions in his sophomore season. He received his scholarship offer from the Buckeyes on April 12.

The Buckeyes have already begun putting together a solid 2027 class but hope to remain involved for Wily-Ava.

"He has a rare combination of range, ball skills, instincts and hitting ability,"

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wrote 247Sports national recruiting analyst Greg Biggins. "He could easily grow into a linebacker by the time he hits college. Has a lean frame and will be able to add a ton of good weight in the coming years. He's a physical player, a very good open-field tackler and gets downhill and flies off the hash to make a play. Wily-Ava is strong in space and an excellent open-field tackler. He shows good timing and closing speed as a blitzing and has a really nice all-around game."

The Buckeyes are also in the top eight for Woodberry Forest, Va., four-star offensive tackle Junior Saunders (6-6, 270), who also included Nebraska, Rutgers, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia Tech, Virginia and Wisconsin. He is considered the No.

Continued On Page 24



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Oregon WR Wooing 5-Star Commit Henry

Continued From Page 23

306 player in the class, the No. 32 offensive tackle and the No. 6 player in Virginia.

Ohio State made the top 12 for Arlington (Texas) Mansfield Summit four-star defensive end Cameron Hall (6-3, 235). Hall's top 12 consisted of the Buckeyes, Arizona State, Baylor, LSU, Michigan, Oklahoma, Ole Miss, SMU, TCU, Texas A&M, Texas Tech and Texas. He is the No. 293 player in the 2027 class and the No. 27 edge rusher.

The Buckeyes were also in the top 10 for one of the top prospects in the 2027 class, with Argyle (Texas) Liberty Christian five-star linebacker Cooper Witten (6-2, 210) naming Ohio State, Alabama, Clemson, Georgia, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas A&M, Texas Tech and Texas as his top schools. Witten is the No. 21 player in his class and the No. 1 linebacker.

Another top name that included Ohio State when he narrowed down his scholarship offers was Texarkana (Texas) High four-star offensive tackle Qua Ford (6-5, 285). He has a top-five list of Ohio State, Oregon, SMU, Tennessee and Texas A&M. Ford is the No. 91 prospect in the 2027 class and the No. 10 offensive tackle.

Buckeyes Make Offers

Ohio State made more scholarship offers since BSB last went to press. Here's a look at the prospects the Buckeyes offered.

• **Bixby, Okla., tight end Connor Arant (6-5, 225)** – Arant is a 2028 prospect and has not been ranked by the recruiting experts yet, but he holds eight Division I offers, seven of which are from Power Four schools. He has scholarship offers from Alabama, Kansas State, Nebraska, Ohio State, Purdue, Tennessee, Tulsa and West Virginia. He is a multi-sport athlete who is also a wrestler at his high school. Arant told 247Sports that the Buckeyes are already one of his top choices after his visit for the game against Rutgers. "(Getting an offer from Ohio State) was an absolute blessing. OSU has been the winningest program in the 21st century, so I was really excited. Coach Ryan Day offered. He said they saw my film and really were impressed."

• **Sarasota (Fla.) Booker defensive lineman Maleek Lee (6-3, 270)** – Lee is in the 2027 class and does not have a ranking yet. He has been offered by 10 Division I programs, which are Georgia Tech, Kansas, Louisville, Missouri, Ohio State, Penn State, Pittsburgh, Syracuse, Liberty and UTSA. He told 247Sports after he was offered by the Buckeyes that, "It felt surreal and it meant a lot knowing a program like that believes in what I can become. (Day) told me they like my upside, my physicality and the way I compete." He also said that after his visit for the Rutgers game, Ohio State is one of the top schools in his recruitment. In his junior season, Lee had 52

tackles, 31 tackles for loss, five sacks, six quarterback hurries, an interception, two forced fumbles and a fumble recovery.

• **Romeoville, Ill., three-star defensive lineman Ohimai Ozolua (6-6, 255)** – Ozolua is the No. 363 player in the 2027 class, the No. 39 defensive lineman and the No. 11 player in Illinois. He also received his scholarship offer from the Buckeyes when he was on campus for the win over the Scarlet Knights on Nov. 22. He holds just seven Division I offers, which include Iowa, Iowa State, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio State and Purdue. He also talked to 247Sports after his visit and said, "What intrigues me most about Ohio State is defensive line coach Larry Johnson, who is a legend with a lot of football knowledge. Their development – they constantly have guys that have opportunities to play at the next level."

• **Baltimore St. Paul's defensive lineman Cahron Wheeler (6-6, 235)** – With no rankings on the recruiting websites, Wheeler is a 2027 prospect whose recruitment is starting to heat up very quickly. He posted on Twitter on Nov. 21 that Ohio State was the first program to offer him a scholarship, but since then, he has posted about offers from Tennessee, Boston College and Maryland.

• **Chandler (Ariz.) Hamilton three-star athlete Keaton Fields (6-2, 180)** – A 2028 prospect, Fields is the No. 150 player in his class, the No. 17 athlete and the No.

4 player in Arizona. He holds just six offers from Arizona, Colorado State, Northern Arizona, Ohio State, UTEP and Vanderbilt.

Other Notes And Tidbits

• The son of former Ohio State quarterback Steve Bellisari committed to play college ball at Miami (Ohio) on Nov. 26. Columbus Watterson three-star quarterback Drew Bellisari (6-3, 190) pledged his services to the RedHawks, announcing the news on Twitter. He is the No. 1,871 player in the country, the No. 105 quarterback and the No. 102 player in Ohio in the 2026 class. The Buckeyes hosted Bellisari on campus during the cycle, but the three-star decided he wanted to be elsewhere in-state.

• Oregon freshman wide receiver Dakorien Moore set his sights on five-star wide receiver Chris Henry Jr. (6-5, 205), an Ohio State commit from Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei. Moore, a former Buckeye target on the trail in the 2025 recruiting class, tweeted and tagged Henry, saying, "(I) need you by my side family." The Ducks have been trying to flip Henry, the No. 10 recruit in the 2026 class, since he committed to the Buckeyes on July 28, 2023, but they have not been successful.

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago — 1990

With depth at outside linebacker stretched to the limits, Ohio State was expected to spend quite a bit of time during the recruiting season trying to lure those who played that position to Columbus.

The season before, the Buckeyes successfully recruited only one linebacker, Randall Brown of Detroit, and he was an inside 'backer.

In addition, injuries had dealt a heavy blow to the outside line-backing corps.

Luckily, nine excellent prospects had expressed interest in attending Ohio State.

Outside linebackers the Buckeyes had a chance to lure to Columbus included Todd Atkins of New Castle (Pa.) Laurel, Joey Baylor of Meridian, Miss., Darryl Elder of Montclair, N.J., Gabe Jackson of New Brighton, Pa., Tony Knez of Youngstown Boardman, Shannon McLean of Detroit DePorres, Curtis Peoples of Columbus Hamilton Township, Craig Powell of Youngstown Rayen and Eli Rashaad of Indianapolis Washington.

25 Years Ago — 2000

Massillon's Justin Zwick was already Ohio's career high school passing leader with 7,208 yards in three seasons.

"It is exciting to have something like that to my credit, but I put it all to my teammates and coaches," said Zwick, who transferred to Washington High that year after his first two years at Orrville. "I've had some good receivers to work with these first three years."

According to national preps expert Doug Huff, only 10 players in U.S. high school history had eclipsed the magical 10,000-yard mark during their careers coming into the 2000 season. Zwick was well within striking distance of that plateau and could put the Ohio record out of reach.

"I am looking at (10,000)," he said. "You have to set goals for yourself and for your team or there is no point to it. That will probably be one of my goals going into next year."

20 Years Ago — 2005

Jason Adjepong, a defensive end out of Carteret, N.J., kept his recruitment quiet for a few months, largely turning down interview requests while his season was underway.

But with the year coming to an end, he was solidly back in the recruiting mix and began his postseason visit slate with a trip to Ohio State.

Unknown to many because of his silence during the season, Adjepong took an official visit to Michigan in early October and said that both the Wolverines and their archrival had a lot to offer.

"They're very similar in a lot of ways," he told BSB. "They have great people around the program, great tradition. Everybody wants to win. There are great facilities. All the way around, they're just great. I enjoy both head coaches, I enjoy both schemes, both D-line coaches, and as far as players, I enjoy the players at both schools as well."

15 Years Ago — 2010

A Cinderella run had Braxton Miller and the Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne Warriors one game away from being crowned state champions. It came after Wayne squeaked into the playoffs as a No. 8 seed in the Division I, Region 4 bracket with a 7-3 record.

His decision to commit to the Buckeyes early so that he could focus on pursuing a state title was paying off.

"I just wanted to play football through all my years (in high school) without worrying about college right now," the nation's top quarterback said at his June 3 press conference. "It came to the point that I did the research and Ohio State came out as my top school, so I wanted to get my commitment out of the way."

10 Years Ago — 2015

As is often the case with proud high school coaches, North Ridgeville, Ohio, head coach Luke Durbin could talk all day about Demario McCall, the nation's No. 5 running back and No. 78 overall prospect.

McCall, a 5-11 tornado of personality and speed, was one of the nation's most explosive and impressive recruits in the class of 2016, and Durbin had no trouble describing the various ways in which his star player could make defenders look foolish. But where he really brightened up was when he paused and asked if he could talk about another side of McCall before launching into a soliloquy made up of equal parts pride and enthusiasm.

"One of the things that I think people don't understand but need to know is that Demario may be the hardest worker in the classroom in the entire high school," Durbin said. "A year ago I asked his chemistry teacher how Demario was doing. The teacher said, 'He's a little confused, but he works on it harder than anyone else. If the rest of my kids worked as hard as he did, this high school would be much better.'"

"The fact that a kid with that bright of an athletic future also

outworks everyone in the classroom says a lot about him."

Five Years Ago — 2020

Steilacoom, Wash., five-star wide receiver Emeka Egbuka made his first trip to Norman, Okla., for the Sooners' game against Baylor on Dec. 5. Oklahoma was considered the biggest threat to Ohio State's chances with Egbuka.

Interestingly, Egbuka – who was considered the top-rated wide receiver and No. 9 prospect overall in the class of 2021 – was actually able to attend the game, since the Big 12 had allowed its member institutions to host fans at a reduced capacity that season despite the pandemic. And though the ongoing recruiting dead period prevented him from meeting with Oklahoma's staff, the Sooners used that attendance loophole to their advantage and provided Egbuka and his father with tickets to the game.

Egbuka, who was still on the Sooners' campus when Buckeye Sports Bulletin went to press, was not expected to make his college decision until the early signing period on Dec. 16-18. Sources inside the Woody Hayes Athletic Center continued to express confidence in Ohio State's standing, even with his last-minute trip to Oklahoma.

One Year Ago — 2024

Ohio State lost another defensive end from its 2025 class when Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star London Merritt decommitted from the Buckeyes on Nov. 26 and pledged his services to Colorado and head coach Deion Sanders two days later on Nov. 28.

Merritt, the No. 144 overall prospect and No. 13 defensive end, originally committed to OSU on March 26 but since then had been on official visits to North Carolina and most recently Colorado on Oct. 11.

This news came just over a week after Philadelphia Imhotep Institute four-star defensive end Zahir Mathis decommitted from Ohio State as well, leaving just four committed defensive linemen in its 2025 class – Zion Grady, Jarquez Carter, Maxwell Roy and Trajen Odom.

The Buckeyes were not done recruiting on the defensive line, however, and hoped to land New Orleans Edna Karr five-star defensive lineman Jahkeem Stewart, who reclassified to the 2025 class earlier that fall and planned to enroll early.

OSU Holds Special Place For Browns' Judkins

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Quinshon Judkins played his first two seasons at Mississippi, but his heart belongs to the Buckeyes.

The Cleveland Browns' rookie running back had a productive and successful 2024 season in helping Ohio State to the College Football Playoff championship, and it was clear in an interview with the Browns' media that his short stay left a lasting impression.

He was asked in early November if he took advantage of the proximity to visit Ohio State.

"A lot, a lot. Those are the roots," he said. "Just to go back there, feel the energy on campus, the vibes, see a lot of the younger guys go out there and perform, coaches, everybody that helped me get here. I like to go back and see those guys and support them this year."

He also made a prediction that, so far, is holding up.

"I think they're going to go undefeated just because of not even the talent level, but the focus and what Coach (Ryan) Day does over there," he said. "He runs a great program. He's a hard-nosed coach, and he believes in his team, so they're going to take it all the way."

Judkins and TreVeyon Henderson were a dynamic combination for the Buckeyes last season, but they were opponents on Oct. 26 when the New England Patriots defeated the Browns 32-13.

Henderson rushed 10 times for 75 yards and lost a fumble. It was a hard day for Judkins, who gained 19 yards on nine carries and had three catches for minus-2 yards.

"It was cool," Judkins said. "During half-time, he kind of said something to me. He was like, 'Stop all that yelling,' something like that. So, it was cool to see him again and see what he does on the field."

Judkins gained 91 yards on 23 carries and had three receptions for 18 yards in

a 26-8 loss to the San Francisco 49ers on Nov. 30. For the season, he has 758 yards on 196 runs (3.9 average) and seven touchdowns along with 17 receptions for 188 yards.

His best game was in Week 5 vs. Minnesota on Oct. 5 in London when he gained 110 yards on 23 carries and had one reception for 18 yards.

Judkins missed the season opener against the Cincinnati Bengals on Sept. 7 while legal matters were resolved.

He was arrested July 12 in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on a charge of "touch or strike/battery/domestic violence" for an alleged incident with a woman he was traveling with on July 7.

The Broward County State Attorney Office announced Aug. 14 that it was not going to pursue formal charges. The NFL then conducted a personal policy investigation, including an interview with Judkins on Sept. 10.

"I'm glad that the prosecutor closed the case and didn't file any charges," he said. "I'm appreciative of that. I'm just happy to be back in Cleveland and with my teammates here and to accomplish my goal."

Late Start

Once Judkins was cleared of the charges, he signed with the Browns and made his debut on Sept. 14 vs. the Baltimore Ravens. He rushed for 61 yards on 10 attempts with a long of 31 late in the game and made three catches for 10 yards.

"Physically, it felt really good," he said afterward. "Come back out there, getting the rhythm for the first time of my career in the NFL. You know, go out there and play."

"I think especially as the game goes on, you start to see the defense and the fronts more, and when they revolve and change from halftime. You get used to different aspects of the game."

He's getting more comfortable as the season progresses in part because of the

stability along the offensive line. Running behind the same group of blockers has been beneficial.

"It helps me a lot," Judkins said. "Just because I'm always in phase with those guys. I know each and every one of them, their advantages, and how they can help me be successful in my game and just the trust. I trust each and every one of those guys. I know they're going to do their job every play, every drive, and I can count on them."

Judkins is aware that a successful college career doesn't always translate to the NFL. He used the time in training around the open weekend of Nov. 2 to self-evaluate.

"As you go on throughout the season, looking at the first half of the season as a competitor and as a player, it's always things you wish you can go back and different plays and stuff like that," he said. "But I think as you go on, you learn, especially being a rookie, it's a lot of things you come into this, especially in my situation, you don't really know. You plan just based off of physicality and your instincts. As you go on throughout the season, you get to see different fronts, different defenses, different coverages, and you just learn as you go. So it's definitely helped."

Judkins has earned a reputation for gaining yards after contact. He credits running back coach Duce Staley

"Coach Duce always says you have to make the first guy miss," he said. "So that's

always my intention. Every time I get the ball, the first guy is not going to tackle me. If it's one guy, I'm always going to make him miss. So that's just my mentality and what I bring to the field."

Judkins was a second-round pick (No. 36) in the 2025 NFL draft after a sterling season in Columbus. He led the Buckeyes in rushing with 1,060 yards and tied for the team lead with 16 touchdowns, including two receiving.

He rushed for 255 yards and scored six touchdowns in the four CFP games, capped by a 100-yard, three-TD effort vs. Notre Dame in the title game. He had a 70-yard run vs. the Fighting Irish on the first drive of the second half.

"It felt really good just because of the execution, how much goes into each run, and then everything gets worked out," he said of the postseason. "I wish I could take all the credit, but it's thanks to the big guys up front. They did their job."

The long playoff run prepared him for the grind of a 17-game NFL season. The Buckeyes played 16 last season, and Judkins thinks that will prevent him from hitting the proverbial "rookie wall."

"I think I have an advantage, because I got to play this amount of games in college," he said. "I didn't have any problems last year. When we got towards the end of the season, I didn't have any issues. I think it helps me."

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Senior Center Dealing With Minor Injury

In Ohio State's 113-60 win over Mount St. Mary's on Nov. 25, senior center Christoph Tilly was held out of the second half with an injury. When the Buckeyes came out of the locker room up 52-26, Tilly was on the bench, moving back and forth between there and the exercise bike throughout the frame.

COURT REPORT Greg Wilson

But head coach Jake Diebler said that it was something that he was aware of before the game, and he didn't believe it would be something that kept Tilly out for a while.

"He has a lower leg (injury), a nagging thing," Diebler said after the win. "We wanted to rest him. It's just precautionary stuff. I don't anticipate it being a long-term thing."

Before he came out of the game, Tilly had already put up 12 points, five rebounds and two assists in just under 14 minutes.

In Tilly's place was sophomore center Ivan Njegovan when the second half began.

His increased role allowed him to have a career-best game against the Mountaineers, putting up 15 points, which more than doubled his previous career high in scoring. He did so on a perfect 7 of 7 from the field and also added four rebounds in the game.

"I thought he let the game come to him," Diebler said. "He didn't play sped up in the paint. Each time he finished, it was on his terms. He took his time and played big. It's great for him to get those reps because we need him."

Against Pittsburgh on Nov. 28, Tilly returned and scored 10 points – going a perfect 8 of 8 on free throws – and grabbed six boards.

OSU Largely Avoiding Midrange

Diebler has made it a point this season that he wants Ohio State's offense to be as efficient as possible. Part of that has been playing fast, which the head coach has made a point of since he went into the transfer portal looking for players who would fit the offense he wanted to run.

But another part of the efficiency equation for Diebler has been taking smarter shots, which has meant taking the mid-



SONNY BROCKWAY

BIG MAN — Santa Clara transfer Christoph Tilly has been a welcome addition for Ohio State. The 7-0 center was averaging 15.3 points and 5.3 rebounds through the first seven games.

range jumper out of the game as much as possible.

"We'd prefer (our two-point shots) to be in the paint. Obviously, we're trying to get

as many looks at the rim as possible," Diebler said. "As far as traditional midrange shots go, whether it's a strength or not, we don't want a high volume of midrange shots. Our guys who are best at shooting from the bounce are all capable at shooting off the bounce from three."

That much has been obvious when looking at where the Buckeyes have been shooting the ball this season so far. In the 118-point game against IU Indy to start the season, the Buckeyes had just two shots that were outside the paint and inside the three-point line. They made 1 of 2 in that game.

The rest of their 116 points in that game came from either in the paint or from beyond the arc.

Then, in the win over Purdue Fort Wayne, the Buckeyes shot just one mid-

range shot and missed it.

Against App State and Notre Dame was when the midrange shot was most prevalent in the offense. OSU was 2 of 5 from that distance when the Mountaineers visited and 3 of 10 against the Fighting Irish.

Then, against Western Michigan, Ohio State took no shots from midrange.

However, much of sophomore guard John Mobley Jr.'s career-high 26 points against Mount St. Mary's came from midrange. He had eight points from inside the three-point line that didn't come near the rim.

He said that, while the team is trying to take more efficient shots, he still worked on that shot over the offseason after he struggled with it last season.

"Going back to the Illinois game last year, not being able to get that shot to fall and not having that second level, I stayed in the gym all summer and worked on that midrange," Mobley said. "It's open a lot for me."

He said the Mountaineers' defensive coverage played a role in that, with the big man playing near the rim, so when Mobley was able to get by his primary defender, the midrange shot was often open for him.

Diebler made it clear that he is not completely against his players shooting from midrange.

"Sometimes a game presents those opportunities," Diebler said. "I don't want our guys overthinking. I want them playing off instinct. We defined good shots and bad shots when we got together this summer. I think our (shot quality) has been really good this year, and part of that is because we're not shooting a ton of midrange shots, which often end up being contested."

He noted after the win over Mount St. Mary's that Mobley's midrange shots were the type of shots he was talking about when he said the opportunities are sometimes presented.

"He's a gifted scorer, so we wanted to be aggressive," Diebler said before the loss to Pittsburgh. "But we wanted to be on balance and for him to manipulate the defense, not let the defense manipulate him. I think he's done that really well the last two games."

Diebler Supports NIL Vote

The OHSAA voted on Nov. 24 to allow high school athletes in Ohio to be able to profit off of their name, image and likeness, which Diebler said he fully supports.

"I'm in favor of it," Diebler said. "We've seen over the years, good players have left the state. Hopefully, this plays a role in helping keep players in Ohio. I think Ohio basketball is a great thing, and it's really good. And when the best players are here, it's even better."

It makes sense that Diebler would want to keep players in the state of Ohio. He's done extremely well recruiting in the Buckeye State since he became the head coach of Ohio State.

Both of his 2026 signees committed as Ohio prospects. Hudson (Ohio) Western Reserve Academy five-star small forward Anthony Thompson (6-8, 205) is the top

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MEN'S BASKETBALL

player in the state, and Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Prolific Prep four-star power forward Alex Smith (6-9, 195) was at Upper Arlington in Columbus throughout the entire recruitment process up through when he pledged to the Buckeyes.

The head coach believes that with high school players now allowed to sign NIL deals, it could be the case that they are more prepared to handle making money when they are at the college level but noted that he's concerned about more than how a prospect can handle receiving NIL deals.

"I think there's potential for that to be the case," Diebler said. "When you come to Ohio State, it's about way more than that, and people that we recruit are aligned in that. Certainly, NIL is an important factor."

Diebler Likes Practice Approach

The Buckeyes were off to a 6-1 start to the new basketball season, with a win over Notre Dame before the loss to Pittsburgh.

While five of those wins came at home over low- to mid-major programs, Diebler feels like the improvements the team has made have still been obvious. The biggest part of that is the attitude with which his team has been approaching every day in practice.

"This team continues to practice well, because there's a high level of maturity on our team and our guys are motivated to continue to get better," Diebler said. "We haven't practiced perfect by any means, but this team is yet to have a complete bad day. We've had some bad moments at times, but those are few and far between. We don't have bad days."

Asked if there were bad practices last season when the Buckeyes finished 17-15 and missed the NCAA Tournament for the third straight season, Diebler didn't have a straightforward answer.

"It was just a different vibe," said Diebler when asked if they had a lot of bad days in practice last year. "The chemistry of this team is different. The experience that we have plays a role in all of that. If you were at practice last year and at practice this year, you would notice a difference."

Arena Naming Rights Could Change

The day before the Buckeyes matched up with Mount St. Mary's, the company that owns the naming rights to Ohio State's basketball arena, Value City Furniture, filed for bankruptcy.

According to a report from The Columbus Dispatch, the university reportedly plans to phase out the arena's name while looking for new potential sponsorships to change the naming rights, although there is no timetable for any decisions.

The arena has been named Value City Arena since the Schottenstein Center was built, when Value City Furniture donated \$1.1 million to the project.

B1G Schedule Coming Up

The season is moving along quickly, with the Big Ten schedule beginning before BSB next goes to press.

Ohio State was scheduled to play Northwestern in Evanston, Ill., on Dec. 6 then come back home to host No. 13 Illinois. The Fighting Illini would be the first

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, W 27-9.

MEN'S BASKETBALL (6-1)

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, W 113-60; **28** at Pittsburgh, L 67-66.
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 (6-1)

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, W 68-56; **26** at Pink Flamingo Championship in the Bahamas vs. West Virginia, W 83-81; **30** NIAGARA W, 130-32.
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; **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.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (5-9, 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, L 3-2 (OT); L 4-3 (OT).
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 (15-1-0, 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, W 8-0; **29** at D1 in DC Tournament in Washington, D.C., vs. Colgate, W 5-0.
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.

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 (6-22, 3-17)

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, L 3-1; **29** at Nebraska, L 3-0.

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.

ranked team the Buckeyes matched up with this season.

They will have a few more nonconference games between playing Illinois and getting back into conference play. Diebler is ready to get into the tougher schedule but is also not looking too far ahead.

"This is what we signed up for," Diebler said. "Pretty soon, we're going to have 19 games in a row that are really hard. Whatever it is, we have to get ready for the next one. It's almost like a football mentality, a 1-0 every day mentality."

After the start of Big Ten play, Ohio State will play in Cleveland on Dec. 13 against West Virginia. Then, after a week-long break, the Buckeyes will be in Atlan-

ta for the CBS Sports Classic to face off against No. 16 North Carolina. They finish the December schedule with a home game against Grambling State on Dec. 23 at 2 p.m.

After improving to 6-0 with a win over Mount St. Mary's, the first time a Buckeye team had reached that mark since 2019, Diebler said he was looking forward to getting into a tougher schedule and trying to translate the things they have been working on into games against possible tournament teams.

"Being able to play at the pace that we play at (becomes more important), even in the half-court," Diebler said. "I don't know that anybody would anticipate us to (play as

well as we did against Mount St. Mary's). But what is our execution like on offense and defense? That's where that stuff becomes even more important.

OSU still wasn't ranked after its solid beginning to the season, although it has seen some support in the AP top 25 poll. In the most recent version released before the games against Mount St. Mary's and Pitt, the Buckeyes received the 32nd most votes in the country, trailing Wisconsin, Kansas, Oregon, Georgetown, Saint Mary's and Nebraska, all of which also just missed the top 25.

Bucks Suffer Same Buzzer-Beating Fate Vs. Pitt

By **GREG WILSON**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Ohio State had two more games since BSB last went to press, first dominating Mount St. Mary's to go undefeated in the season-opening six-game homestand. It was the first time since 2019 that the Buckeyes went that long without a loss.

But they suffered their first loss of the season in their first road game, dropping a contest to Pittsburgh in the same fashion as they did last season, allowing a three-point-er to fall at the buzzer.

OSU Dominates Mountaineers

Ohio State used an efficient offense and another good defensive performance to remain undefeated and beat Mount St. Mary's 113-60 on Nov. 25 at Value City Arena.

The Buckeyes were led by sophomore guard John Mobley Jr. in the contest, who scored a career-high 26 points on 10-of-15 shooting, and they held the Mountaineers to just 37.3 percent from the field (22 of 59).

Ohio State shot well as a team, making 41 of 64 from the field (64.1 percent) and knocking down 15 of 31 three-pointers (48.4 percent).

"The big focus for us tonight was to play more possessions at a high level on both offense and defense, and I think we did

that," head coach Jake Diebler said after the game. "I thought we executed very well, and some guys were able to get into a rhythm. All of our guys played really connected on both sides of the basketball."

Mobley scored the first five points of the game, but the Mountaineers took advantage of a pair of Christoph Tilly turnovers to tie it up at 5 before junior forward Devin Royal went on a 5-0 run of his own for a 10-5 score.

After a Mount St. Mary's three-pointer, the Buckeyes went on an 8-0 run to take an 18-8 lead at 13:49 of the first.

The Buckeyes remained efficient from the field on the way to a 29-15 lead at 10:27 thanks to Tilly's first three-pointer of the game on his third attempt.

The Mountaineers made three of their next four shots to bring the score within eight, 31-23, at 7:37. Tilly got the lead back to double digits by converting a three-point play. That began a 10-0 run for the Buckeyes, with Bruce Thornton scoring five of those points and Tilly getting the other five.

Junior forward Luke McEldon ended that run with a layup, but the Buckeyes held a 41-25 lead with 4:24 to go in the first half. The Buckeyes didn't stop there, however, and added nine more points to take a 50-25 lead at 1:33 on a three-pointer by Thornton.

The finish to the first half was helped by the defense forcing Mount St. Mary's to one make on its last nine shots of the frame. The Buckeyes shot 58.6 percent from the field in the half (17 of 29), which included 7 of 16 three-pointers falling to take a 52-26 lead into the locker room.

That quickly became a 38-point lead at the start of the second half when OSU went up 69-31 just 4:09 into the period.

The Mountaineers managed a 6-0 run to make the score 74-41 at 12:19, but sophomore center Ivan Njegovan scored four straight points in the paint to end it. Njegovan stayed hot with a three from the top of the key to stretch the lead to 40 points, 85-45, with 9:16 remaining.

The Buckeyes hit the 100-point mark on a fastbreak dunk by freshman forward Amare Bynum and went up by 50 when freshman guard Mathieu Grujicic knocked down a free throw at 2:44.

Mobley, who had four rebounds to go with his 26 points, was followed by Royal's 17, Njegovan's 15, Thornton's 14 and Tilly's 12. Senior forward Brandon Noel led the team with seven rebounds while Thornton dished out a team-leading five assists. The Buckeyes nearly doubled their guests on the boards, 41-22.

The Mountaineers were led by McEldon, who had 19 points in the game and added eight rebounds.

OSU Loses On Buzzer-Beater

Pittsburgh made a buzzer-beating three for the second straight year to take down the Buckeyes, 67-66, with a three-point-

er from Damarco Minor at the Petersen Events Center on Nov. 28.

Ohio State (6-1) overcame an early cold start to take a lead midway through the second half and almost held off a late comeback attempt from the Panthers (5-3), who had the game tied up with under 30 seconds to go before Bynum had a tip-in off a rebound from his own shot to take the lead. With under four seconds to go in the game, Minor took the ball down the court and made the game-winner.

The Buckeyes allowed Pitt to get out to a 16-4 lead at 14:48 of the first with the help of Minor, who scored eight of those points for the Panthers.

But Mobley started a streak of three straight three-pointers for the Buckeyes, with Bynum and Royal following suit. After a hook shot from Njegovan, the Buckeyes were within one point, 16-15.

Over that stretch, they were helped by their defense that forced Pitt to miss 12 straight shots from 14:09 to 8:57. But Ohio State's run came to a halt while Minor scored five more points and had two steals before the next timeout that Pitt went into with a 30-20 lead at 3:24 in the first half.

At 2:20, Mobley was fouled and came down awkwardly on his ankle, missing two free throws before limping off to the bench. He would not return for the rest of the contest.

Ohio State went into halftime down by 10 points, 34-24, after a Royal layup with three seconds remaining to tighten the gap.

The Buckeyes scored the first six points of the second half with Royal getting four of them in 1:12 of game time with sophomore guard Gabe Cupps and Bynum on the floor in place of Mobley and Noel.

After the Panthers were out to a 41-35 lead, neither team scored until Pittsburgh made a free throw and Thornton added two makes from the charity stripe of his own to make it 42-37 with 14:37 left in the game.

The Buckeyes would tie the game up at 42 after a hook shot from Tilly and a three-pointer from Royal.

Ohio State grabbed its first lead of the game at 48-47 on two free throws from Tilly and took it back again, 51-49 with a three-point play from Thornton at 7:02.

That lead stretched to five when Royal drained a three from the corner at 5:03, but Pitt remained in the game, bringing the score to 58-57 Buckeyes with a free throw by Cameron Corhen before Royal hit a turnaround jumper in the paint and made a layup the next time down the court to push the lead back to three, 62-59. In between Royal points, OSU gave up two offensive boards, which allowed the Panthers' Barry Dunning Jr. to make a layup.

With just over a minute left, Thornton broke a 62-62 tie with a floater in the paint. Cupps was called for a foul, and the Panthers tied the game back up on a pair of Corhen free throws, but Bynum's tip-in came on the Buckeyes' next trip down the



John Mobley Jr.



Devin Royal

Pittsburgh 67, Ohio State 66							
Nov. 28, 2025 Petersen Events Center • Pittsburgh							
		1	2	F			
Ohio State (6-1)		24	42	66			
Pittsburgh (5-3)		34	33	67			
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D			
Royal	39	9-15	0-0	0-2	2	3	22
Thornton	38	7-15	3-3	1-12	1	0	18
Tilly	32	1-8	8-8	2-4	0	3	10
Mobley Jr.	14	1-3	0-2	1-0	0	1	3
Noel	9	0-2	0-0	0-0	1	0	0
Bynum	31	3-5	0-0	2-3	0	3	7
Njegovan	8	2-4	0-0	1-3	1	2	4
Cupps	27	0-2	2-2	0-4	3	2	2
Chatman	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	3	0
White	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Totals	200	23-54	13-15	9-29	8	17	66
Percentages: FG: 42.6%. FT: 86.7%. Three-point field goals: 7-24 (Royal 4-8, Thornton 1-5, Mobley 1-3, Bynum 1-2, Tilly 0-2, Noel 0-2, Cupps 0-2). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 3 (Thornton, Bynum, Njegovan). Turnovers: 13 (Royal 4, Tilly 3, Thornton, Mobley, Noel, Njegovan, Cupps, Team). Steals: 3 (Tilly, Mobley, Cupps).							
Pittsburgh	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D			
Dunning Jr.	39	8-13	1-1	1-4	0	3	18
Minor	37	7-14	1-1	0-2	2	3	18
Corhen	36	6-14	5-10	5-5	1	2	18
Witherspoon	37	4-14	3-4	0-4	2	1	11
Siulepa	24	1-9	0-0	4-3	0	4	2
Indrusaitis	20	0-3	0-0	1-1	1	2	0
Amadou Kante	7	0-2	0-0	1-0	0	2	0
Totals	200	26-69	10-16	16-23	6	17	67
Percentages: FG: 37.7%. FT: 62.5%. Three-point field goals: 5-22 (Minor 3-8, Dunning 1-6, Witherspoon 0-3, Corhen 1-2, Siulepa 0-2, Indrusaitis 0-1). Team rebounds: 8. Blocked shots: 3 (Dunning, Minor, Indrusaitis). Turnovers: 5 (Corhen 2, Indrusaitis 2, Minor). Steals: 9 (Minor 5, Dunning, Corhen, Witherspoon, Indrusaitis). Officials: Ayers, Groover, Morrissey. Attendance: 6,299.							

Ohio State 113, Mount St. Mary's 60									
Nov. 25, 2025 Value City Arena • Columbus									
		1	2	F					
Mount St. Mary's (1-6)		26	34	60					
Ohio State (6-0)		52	61	113					
MSM	Total	FG	FT	Reb.					
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Rozakeas	30	2-7	0-0	1-0	2	1	6		
McEldon	28	9-15	1-4	4-4	2	3	19		
Keyes	28	5-16	1-2	0-5	1	5	13		
So	31	3-9	3-4	0-2	6	0	10		
Lipscomb	31	1-5	1-2	0-2	3	3	4		
Haigh	25	1-5	0-0	0-0	0	2	2		
Diop	12	1-1	2-2	1-0	0	3	4		
Espinosa	11	0-0	1-2	0-1	0	1	1		
Miller IV	3	0-1	1-2	0-0	0	0	1		
Rogers	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0		
Totals	200	22-59	10-18	8-14	14	18	60		
Percentages: FG: 37.3%. FT: 55.6%. Three-point field goals: 6-32 (Keyes 2-11, Rozakeas 2-7, So 1-4, Lipscomb 1-4, Haigh 0-4, McEldon 0-1, Miller 0-1). Team rebounds: 2. Blocked shots: 1 (Keyes). Turnovers: 13 (Keyes 3, Lipscomb 3, So 2, Espinosa 2, McEldon, Haigh, Diop). Steals: 4 (Rozakeas, McEldon, Keyes, Lipscomb).									
Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.					
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.		
Noel	23	3-5	2-2	1-6	0	2	9		
Royal	30	7-10	1-1	1-2	4	1	17		
Tilly	14	3-6	5-5	0-5	2	1	12		
Mobley Jr.	26	10-15	2-2	0-4	1	1	26		
Thornton	28	5-8	2-3	1-4	5	2	14		
Bynum	22	2-4	3-4	0-3	3	2	8		
Njegovan	16	7-7	0-0	2-2	0	2	15		
Cupps	14	0-1	0-0	0-2	1	2	0		
Grujicic	9	0-3	1-2	0-2	1	2	1		
Chatman	10	3-4	0-0	0-0	0	2	9		
White	6	1-1	0-0	0-1	0	0	2		
Nash	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	0	0		
Totals	200	41-64	16-19	7-34	18	17	113		
Percentages: FG: 64.1%. FT: 84.2%. Three-point field goals: 15-31 (Mobley 4-9, Chatman 3-4, Royal 2-4, Thornton 2-3, Tilly 1-3, Grujicic 0-3, Bynum 1-2, Noel 1-1, Njegovan 1-1, Cupps 0-1). Team rebounds: 5. Blocked shots: 0. Turnovers: 8 (Tilly 3, Mobley, Bynum, Njegovan, Cupps, Team). Steals: 6 (Royal 2, Thornton 2, Mobley, White). Officials: Comer, McNutt, Sciroto. Attendance: 10,140.									

floor.

With just under four seconds remaining, Minor took the ball all the way down the court on his own and made the contested jumper.

Ohio State was led by Royal with 22 points. Thornton was just behind him, recording 18 points and 13 rebounds, his first double-double of the year. It was the first game in Thornton's OSU career in which he recorded double-digit boards. Ohio State struggled from beyond the arc, hitting just 5 of 22 (22.7 percent), but Royal was 4 of 8.

The Panthers had three players, including Minor, score 18 points, with Corhen adding 10 rebounds to go along with his 18. Dunning was the third Panther with 18 points.

Ohio State was scheduled to play three more games before BSB next goes to press. First, it will head to Evanston, Ill., to match up against Northwestern on Dec. 6 (2 p.m., BTN), before coming back home to host No. 13 Illinois on Dec. 9 (7:30 p.m., Peacock). The Buckeyes will then play West Virginia in the Cleveland Hoops Showdown on Dec. 13 at Rocket Arena in Cleveland (8 p.m., ESPN).

Martin Breaks Out In Bahamas Tournament

Ohio State had a superb two-game stretch in The Bahamas from Nov. 24-26. The Buckeyes took down a solid mid-major team in Belmont and upset No. 21 West Virginia to win the Pink Flamingo Championship.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Bobby Gorbett

Ohio State's 83-81 win over West Virginia wouldn't have been possible without freshman guard Bryn Martin. In the Buckeyes' narrow win, Martin had a career-best performance, scoring 16 points and shooting 6 of 9 from the field, including 4 of 7 from three-point range. The Springboro, Ohio, native also had three assists, two steals and a block before fouling out.

Martin wasn't quite as effective in her team's 68-56 win over Belmont two days earlier. She finished that game with five points on 2-of-8 shooting, but Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff generally liked what he saw out of the freshman.

"Bryn was great," McGuff said after Ohio State's win over West Virginia. "She made some huge shots today. I think in general for two games in a row, she was in the right spot at the right time. She did a great job communicating out there, and she is just one of the glue people who helps everyone stay organized, and when we're organized, we can execute. She made huge shots today and overall had a great two games."



Bryn Martin

Martin's production couldn't have come at a better time. After scoring eight points combined in the first three quarters, she made a huge impact in crunch time to help the Buckeyes overcome a late deficit.

With her team trailing by eight points with less than four minutes to go, Martin drained two three-pointers and scored a layup in a 1:25 span to trim West Virginia's lead to 77-75.

Martin said the performances she had in the tournament have allowed her to gain more confidence as the Buckeyes head toward Big Ten play.

"Getting the minutes I have (received) has allowed me to get more comfortable playing at the college level," Martin said. "Taking those first couple of games to really get used to everything has been really nice. I have gotten more comfortable with my teammates and the style of play, and I have really excelled in that (way)."

Martin's game against West Virginia was certainly her best of the season so far, but for the season, she has been one of the Buckeyes' more reliable scorers off the bench. Through Nov. 26, the freshman was averaging 6.5 points per game, 1.7 rebounds per game and 1.3 assists per game while shooting 15 of 32 from the field (46.9

percent) and 9 of 21 from beyond the arc (42.9 percent).

Sophomore point guard Jaloní Cambridge is excited to see how well the young guard can play as she continues to grow this season.

"We've been telling her all year to shoot the ball, and she comes in and does what she needs to do, she shoots the ball," Cambridge said of her freshman teammate. "She's a shooter, and I think she can be really huge for this team moving forward. She has already been huge now, so I'm excited to see how she grows from here."

Bucks Survive Foul Trouble

Ohio State's win over West Virginia was hard to believe for a number of reasons. Not only were the Mountaineers undefeated and nationally ranked heading into the game, but they seemingly had the Buckeyes on the ropes in the fourth quarter.

Trailing by six heading into the fourth quarter, the Buckeyes played well enough early on in the final frame to take a 64-63 lead, but disaster struck for McGuff's squad in the middle of the final quarter.

In addition to West Virginia responding with its own 11-2 scoring run that spanned 2:01, Ohio State starting guards Jaloní and Kennedy Cambridge each had fouled out of the game.

Jaloní Cambridge, who at times struggled with foul trouble last year and was disqualified from three games, said it was certainly not ideal to watch the closing stretch from the sidelines.

"(It was) very unfortunate to watch the game from the bench, but I have a lot of faith in my teammates," she said. "They all stepped up. They're very capable of doing whatever we need to do to get the win."

With the Cambridge sisters fouling out, the Buckeyes went with a lineup that included Martin and sophomore guard Ava Watson. McGuff said he had confidence his lineup could still produce on the offensive end, even if he had more questions about that unit's ability to get stops.

"(The message was) to stay together, to continue to fight and find a way to get enough stops and rebounds," McGuff said. "I thought we could get enough points on the offensive end. It was just a matter of whether we could get stops and rebounds."

Martin made some shots as McGuff expected, but Watson carried the day defensively.

The three-point specialist came up with three steals in the fourth quarter alone. Watson also assisted on a crucial go-ahead layup by sophomore center Elsa Lemmilä that put the Buckeyes up 81-80 with 24 seconds left and went 4 for 4 from the free-throw line in the final two minutes.

McGuff didn't go as far as to say he was surprised by the success of his young players to close the game, but he did say the team's win showed the improvements they've made early in the season.

"I think I was more just really happy for the team," McGuff said. "We had to really fight and scratch and claw. 'The one thing I told them, I don't think we would have won this game 10 days ago. I don't think that at

that point we were good enough against a really good and well-coached West Virginia team, but I think we've gotten better. I still think there's a way to go before we can be who we're capable of being, but it's certainly a good win against a great team."



Kevin McGuff

It wasn't the first time the Buckeyes used a strong fourth quarter to pick up a win. In their triumph over Belmont, the Buckeyes and Bruins were tied after three quarters. However, Ohio State outscored Belmont 20-8 in the final stanza to pick up the 12-point win. Jaloní Cambridge said the Buckeyes' late-game heroics in both games in the Bahamas are a good indicator of the type of competitive spirit the team possesses.

"It shows that we have grit," Cambridge said. "It shows that we're ready to fight anytime. Monday's game also proved that we will do whatever it takes to win, and that's what we definitely showed today."

Cambridge Named Tournament MVP

Despite fouling out late in her team's

win over West Virginia, Jaloní Cambridge had a great showing in the Pink Flamingo Championship. On the way to being named the tournament's Most Valuable Player, she averaged 24.0 points and 4.5 rebounds over two games while shooting 18 of 37 (48.7 percent) from the field.

Cambridge was off to a great start this season. Through six games, she was averaging 20.8 points per game, which by far was the most on the team and the 21st-most nationally.

Junior guard Chance Gray was named to the Pink Flamingo All-Tournament team as well. Gray, who had been off to a cold shooting start from three-point range, found a groove in The Bahamas.

The former Oregon transfer averaged 16.0 points over two games and shot 10 of 21 from the field, including 9 of 16 from beyond the arc (56.3 percent). Other than Cambridge, Gray was the only Buckeye to score at least 10 points in each of Ohio State's two wins in the tournament.



Jaloní Cambridge

Buckeye Sports BulletinBoard

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

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Buckeyes Take Pink Flamingo Championship

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

Ohio State picked up a pair of wins in The Bahamas during the Pink Flamingo Championship. In both of their games against Belmont and West Virginia, the Buckeyes used impressive fourth quarters to capture victories.

OSU Survives Test Against Belmont

In its first game of the Pink Flamingo Championship in the Bahamas, Ohio State (4-1) overcame a slow start to defeat Belmont (3-3) 68-56 on Nov. 24.

The Buckeyes trailed at halftime, 31-30, but outscored the Bruins 20-8 in the fourth quarter to pick up their fourth win of the season. After the game, Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff was proud of the way his team executed down the stretch to pick up the win.

“With such a young team and a lot of young players, close games are a little bit difficult, but I thought we handled it well,” McGuff said. “I think the key is to obviously lock in, get stops, get rebounds, but also be able to execute in a manner in the half-court that gets you good shots, and we did that.”

The Buckeyes struggled early on against the Bruins. After giving up the first four points of the game, Ohio State surged in front with a three-point jumper from junior guard Chance Gray and a midrange jumper from sophomore point guard Jalonι Cambridge.

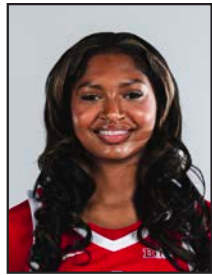
The two teams would continue to fight for the lead until Belmont closed the opening frame with a 7-0 scoring run to take an 18-13

lead into the second quarter.

Cambridge made another three-pointer to open the second quarter, and after two free throws from senior guard T'wana Todd, the game was tied at 18.

Still, the Buckeyes' defense struggled to get stops, and Belmont went on a 13-6 scoring run to create a seven-point lead, 31-24, with 3:15 to go before the break.

Despite not playing at its best in the first half, Ohio State got back into the game when Gray made two three-point jumpers in the final 2:11 of the first half. Gray's three-pointers made the score 31-30 in favor of the Bruins at halftime.



Chance Gray

Ohio State came out with a different level of defensive intensity in the second half. The Buckeyes held the Bruins scoreless over the first two minutes of the third quarter to take a 36-31 lead with Cambridge scoring on a pair of layups.

The Buckeyes led 38-32 after a pair of free throws from Cambridge but were held scoreless for the next 3:48 as Belmont cut the lead to four.

Redshirt-freshman forward Kylee Kitts ended Ohio State's scoring drought with a pair of free throws, but the Bruins responded with a three-point jumper to pull to 40-37. Cambridge converted a three-point play on the other end after making a layup and being fouled.

After Belmont guard Emily La Chappell made her second three-point jumper in as many possessions, Ohio State freshman Bryn Martin answered with her own three-point jumper to keep the Buckeyes up six, 46-40 with 2:43 to play in the third. Belmont didn't go away, instead evening the game at 48 with an 8-2 scoring run to close the third quarter.

The Bruins scored their first point of the fourth quarter on a free throw from guard Tuti Jones at the 7:17 mark, but by then the Buckeyes led 56-49. Later, Gray made another three-pointer to extend Ohio State's lead to 11 with 6:20 left in the game.

The Bruins got back in it with a 7-1 scoring run that made the score 61-56 with 3:49 to go, but the Buckeyes were dominant from there. Ohio State didn't allow a single point over the final 3:49 and scored the final seven to win by 12.

Cambridge was Ohio State's leading scorer in the win. She finished the game with 26 points on 9-of-16 shooting (56.3 percent) and had two assists and six rebounds. Gray (17 points) and Kitts (12 points) also reached double figures. Kitts also finished with a career-high 15 rebounds.

As a team, Ohio State did not shoot the ball well. The Buckeyes made just 20 of 57 field-goal attempts for a season-low shooting percentage of 35.1. However, the Buckeyes held Belmont to just 19-of-58 shooting (32.8 percent).

Jones was Belmont's leading scorer. She had 19 points, shooting 6 of 12 from the field.

OSU Late Comeback Wins Title

Ohio State (5-1) used late-game heroics at

the end of its 83-81 win over No. 21 West Virginia (6-1) to claim the Pink Flamingo Championship in the Bahamas on Nov. 26. The Buckeyes trailed by eight points with 4:34 to go in the game and had four of their players foul out, but they ended the game with a 17-7 run to come up with the ranked win.

After the game, McGuff was pleased with the way his team battled through adversity to defeat the Mountaineers.

“It was a hard-fought game, it was a physical game, and obviously with people fouling out, we got a little frustrated,” McGuff said. “We did a great job with people coming off the bench, we stayed together and made some big plays down the stretch to win.”

The first couple of minutes couldn't have gone much worse for the Buckeyes. Ohio State opened the game with two turnovers on its first three possessions, which led to it falling behind 13-2 early in the game.

The Buckeyes responded quickly with a 17-6 run that tied the game at the 8:39 mark of the second quarter on an Ava Watson layup.

After the Mountaineers went back in front with a 7-2 spurt, Cambridge ended a brief Ohio State scoring drought with a three-point jumper. WVU went back up by four, and then Cambridge nailed a jumper, Martin made a three-point jumper, and Gray put the Buckeyes in front with a layup at 2:51, 31-30.

Ohio State's defense was dominant to end the first half. The Buckeyes didn't allow a field goal over the final 3:16 of the second quarter and took a 33-31 lead into the locker room.

Ohio State picked up where it left off in the third quarter. After another two buckets by Jalonι Cambridge, junior guard Kennedy Cambridge drained a three-pointer at the 7:27 mark before her sister knocked down a free throw that helped the Buckeyes grow their lead to six, 41-35.

Ohio State led by at least three until West Virginia turned its deficit into a lead with a third-quarter-ending 14-2 scoring run in just 2:01.

Trailing 61-55 heading into the fourth quarter, Gray helped give the Buckeyes a boost with two three-point jumpers on their first two possessions.

Gray's threes cut the Mountaineer lead to 63-61 at 9:15. Kennedy Cambridge tied the game at 66 three minutes later, but West Virginia stormed back in front with an 8-0 scoring run. Martin ended the scoring run with a three-point jumper at 3:48 that made the score 74-69.

After both teams made free throws, Martin scored five straight to cut West Virginia's lead to two with 2:23 to go.

With 47 seconds left, Kitts made two free throws to tie the game at 79, and then West Virginia's Gia Cook made 1 of 2 free throws to make it 80-79 at 0:36.

Sophomore center Elsa Lemmilä made a go-ahead shot with only 24 seconds left. The Buckeyes forced a huge stop on the other end, and Watson made two free throws to put the Buckeyes up 83-80 with three seconds left.



Kennedy Cambridge

Ohio State 83, West Virginia 81							
Nov. 26, 2025							
Baha Mar Conv. Ctr. • Nassau, Bahamas							
		1	2	3	4	F	
West Virginia (6-1)		17	14	30	20	81	
Ohio State (5-1)		15	18	22	28	83	
West Virginia	Total	FT	Reb.				
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Wheeler	37	9-12	1-1	2-12	4	3	19
Thomas	31	1-3	3-4	2-1	2	3	5
Cooke	36	6-18	12-17	0-3	1	3	24
Shaw	38	4-11	1-3	1-5	3	2	13
Harrison	32	4-8	5-6	0-0	4	4	13
Woodley	11	2-3	1-2	0-0	0	0	5
Riviere	9	1-1	0-0	1-1	0	0	2
Makalusky	6	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	1	0
Totals	200	27-56	23-33	14-24	15	16	81
Percentages: FG: 48.2%. FT: 69.7%. Three-point field goals: 4-17. (Shaw 4-9, Cooke 0-5, Harrison 0-2, Woodley 0-1). Team rebounds: 10. Blocked shots: 2 (Wheeler, Thomas). Turnovers: 25 (Wheeler 8, Harrison 5, Shaw 3, Cooke 2, Woodley 2, Riviere 2, Thomas, Makalusky, Team). Steals: 7 (Harrison 3, Wheeler 2, Cooke, Shaw)							
Ohio State	Total	FT	Reb.				
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Kitts	26	2-7	4-4	2-0	1	5	8
Gray	34	5-8	1-2	0-1	7	1	15
K. Cambridge	26	2-4	1-4	3-2	4	5	6
Todd	11	1-2	2-2	0-1	1	1	4
J. Cambridge	35	9-21	3-4	0-3	1	5	22
Lemmilä	20	2-4	0-0	2-5	0	4	4
Martin	17	6-9	0-0	1-0	3	5	16
Hobbs	10	1-2	0-0	1-2	1	0	2
Watson	21	1-4	4-4	1-0	4	2	6
Totals	200	29-61	15-20	11-17	22	28	83
Percentages: FG: 47.5%. FT: 75.0%. Three-point field goals: 10-22 (Martin 4-7, Gray 4-6, J. Cambridge 1-5, Watson 0-2, K. Cambridge 1-1, Kitts 0-1). Team rebounds: 4. Blocked shots: 6 (Lemmilä 3, Kitts, K. Cambridge, Martin). Turnovers: 17 (J. Cambridge 4, Kitts 2, Gray 2, K. Cambridge 2, Lemmilä 2, Martin 2, Watson 2, Team). Steals: 14 (K. Cambridge 4, Watson 4, Todd 2, Martin 2, Kitts, J. Cambridge). Officials: Mark Berger, Angie Enlund, Cameron Inouye Attendance: 237							

West Virginia had one last chance to tie the game with a few seconds left, and Kitts fouled Sydney Shaw while she was attempting a potentially game-tying three-point shot. Needing to make all three free throws to send the game into overtime, Shaw missed the first and had to purposefully miss the third to keep the game alive. Lemmilä grabbed the rebound to solidify the win.

Ohio State was led by Jalonι Cambridge in the win. She had 22 points on 9-of-21 shooting (42.9 percent). Martin was the Buckeyes' second-leading scorer with 16 points, shooting 6 of 9 from the field and 4 of 7 from three-point range. Gray dished out a team-high seven assists to go with her 15 points, and Lemmilä led Ohio State with seven rebounds. The Buckeyes went 29 of 61 from the field as a team (47.5 percent), and the Mountaineers were 27 of 56 for 48.2 percent.

West Virginia's Gia Cooke was the team's leading scorer with 24 points, shooting 6 of 18 from the field. Kierra Wheeler had 19 points and 12 rebounds for the Mountaineers, who held a 38-28 edge on the boards.

Four games will be covered in the next issue of BSB. The Buckeyes take on Niagara on Nov. 30 before opening Big Ten play with a road game against Northwestern on Dec. 7 (2 p.m., BTN) and returning home to Northern Kentucky on Dec. 11 (6:30 p.m., B1G-Plus) and Toledo on Dec. 14 (1 p.m., B1G-Plus).

Interim Smith Among Top Penn State Candidates

Amid a late-season turnaround during which Penn State has managed to win its last three games, Nittany Lions interim head coach Terry Smith has elevated himself into conversations of receiving the full-time role.

BIG TEN
NOTES
Sam Cipriani

After Penn State fired former head coach James Franklin following the Nittany Lions' 22-21 loss to Northwestern at home on Oct. 11, Smith was forced to step in and promoted to interim coach for the remainder of the season.

The Nittany Lions started off slow under Smith with a 25-24 loss to Iowa in Kinnick Stadium as well as losses to the top two teams in the country in No. 1 Ohio State (38-14) and No. 2 Indiana (27-24). But since a 28-10 win over Michigan State on Nov. 15, Smith has Penn State back on track.

The Nittany Lions returned home for an offensive onslaught against Nebraska in a 37-10 victory before beating Rutgers 40-36 on Nov. 29 to become bowl-eligible.

While Penn State has yet to officially identify its top coaching candidates, all-time great college football head coach Nick Saban shared his opinions on who should lead the Nittany Lions football program.

The former Alabama head coach said Penn State should turn its attention to former New York Giants head coach Brian Daboll, who could be a home-run hire for the Nittany Lions.

"He's a very good coach, he's a bright guy, he's a good recruiter, he relates well to the players, he's a good teacher, he's got a good offensive mind, and he'll be able to put a good staff together," Saban said. "I think that would be an outstanding hire."

Daboll has spent four total seasons coaching at the collegiate level, including the first two stops of his career at William & Mary as a volunteer assistant in 1997 and as a graduate assistant at Michigan State from 1998-99. Daboll also spent one season at Alabama in 2017 as its offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach, helping lead the Crimson Tide to a national championship before returning to the NFL.

MSU Fires Smith, Looks To Fitzgerald

Following a 4-8 season where the Spartans won just one game in conference, Michigan State has fired head coach Jonathan Smith after his second year at the helm.

Smith finished his career 9-15 at Michigan State. However, Michigan State's five wins from the 2024 season were vacated as a result of violations under former head coach Mel Tucker and his staff. His official NCAA record is just 4-15.

With the Spartans letting go of Smith on Nov. 30, Michigan State was expected to hire former Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald to be the program's new leader, according to Chris Solari and Graham Couch of the Detroit Free Press. The move was not made official yet as BSB went to press.

Despite a strong opening to the year where Michigan State started 3-0, with nonconference wins over Western Michigan, Boston College and Youngstown State, the Spartans' season quickly turned sour when they entered

Big Ten play.

Michigan State lost its first eight games of conference play under Smith in 2025, a streak during which the Spartans lost by at least two scores in the first five of those games. Those first five losses included a gantlet of away contests against USC, Nebraska and Indiana, as well as home games against UCLA and Michigan.

Michigan State had the chance to earn victories at Minnesota and Iowa late in the season, and with leads in the fourth quarter in both games, the Spartans seemed primed to win. Despite its late leads in each game, Michigan State lost by three to both – on a game-winning field goal against Iowa and a game-clinching touchdown from Minnesota in overtime after the Spartans elected to kick a field goal first.

With just a 1-8 record in conference this season, Smith finished his career winning only 4 of 18 games in Big Ten competition over his two seasons with the Spartans.

If Fitzgerald is officially hired at Michigan State, it will be his first coaching job since he was fired from Northwestern in July 2023 following allegations about hazing within the football program.

U-M Wins Players Era Tournament

Michigan rolled through one of college basketball's deepest tournaments during NCAA Feast Week and the Players Era Festival.

In the men's Players Era Championship in Las Vegas that featured a whopping 18 teams and eight ranked opponents including No. 3 Houston, No. 8 Alabama, No. 12 Gonzaga, No. 14 St. Johns, No. 15 Iowa State, No. 17 Tennessee and No. 21 Auburn, the Wolverines were dominant on their way to the tournament crown.

No. 7 Michigan won all three of its matchups over the week by at least 30 points, defeating San Diego State (3-3), 94-54, on Nov. 24, beating Auburn (6-2), 102-72, on Nov. 25 and finally winning, 101-61, against Gonzaga (7-1) in the tournament championship on Nov. 26.

It marked Gonzaga's worst loss as a program since Jan. 19, 1990, when Loyola Marymount handed the Bulldogs a 144-100 defeat.

Michigan senior forward Yaxel Lendeborg was named the Players Era Championship MVP following a game-high 20-point, 11-rebound performance in the title game against Gonzaga. Lendeborg totaled at least 15 points and five rebounds in each of the Wolverines' three games during the tournament.

With the tournament victory, Michigan earned \$1 million in NIL compensation, while the runner-up Gonzaga took home \$500,000.

Michigan's wins over Auburn and Gonzaga were the first time the Wolverines have won back-to-back games against ranked opponents since December 2019.

Michigan (7-0) had just over a week off before it opened Big Ten play against Rutgers (5-3) at the Crisler Center on Dec. 6.

The women's Players Era Championship was much smaller, showcasing just four teams battling it out in the tournament, though it included four national powerhouses.

In a pool featuring No. 2 South Carolina, No. 3 UCLA, No. 4 Texas and Duke, the Longhorns were victorious over the Gamecocks, 66-64, in the championship on Nov. 27. UCLA fell to Texas 76-65 in the semifinals of the tournament before the Bruins whopped Duke 89-59 to claim third place in the tournament.

UCLA (8-1) followed up its third-place finish in the Players Era Tournament with a 99-77

victory over No. 14-ranked Tennessee (5-2) on Nov. 30.

Rhule Talks Raiola Rumors

With Dayton Raiola, the younger brother of Nebraska quarterback Dylan Raiola, backing out of his commitment to the Cornhuskers, head coach Matt Rhule was pressed on where things stand with his sophomore quarterback.

Rhule said that although he was aware of the decommitment of Dayton, he had not heard any information suggesting it had any connection to Dylan's situation.

"I haven't seen that report," Rhule said on Nov. 26. "I haven't seen that. I would never get up here and talk about a player. I love Dylan like I love all my guys. He's in there in treatment right now. So I don't know about that. I don't know anything about that."

Dayton is a three-star prospect out of Buford High School in Georgia and ranks as the No. 1,791 player in the class of 2026 and the 99th-ranked quarterback. He had been committed to Nebraska since September 2024 before decommitting on Nov. 19.

Dylan was off to a strong start in 2025, leading the Cornhuskers to a 7-2 record before suffering a season-ending broken fibula in Nebraska's 21-17 loss against USC on Nov. 1.

In nine games of action for Nebraska in 2025, Dylan completed 181 of 250 passes (72.4 percent) for 2,000 yards, 18 touchdowns and six interceptions.

Nebraska closed out its season Nov. 28 with a 40-16 loss to Iowa at Memorial Stadium as the Cornhuskers ended 2025 with a 7-5 record.

Allen Breaks PSU Rushing Record

During Penn State's 37-10 victory over Nebraska Nov. 22 at Beaver Stadium, Nittany Lions running back Kaytron Allen broke a record standing for 15 years.

Allen broke the mark of 3,932 rushing yards set by former Penn State running back Evan Royster, who played for the Nittany Lions from 2007-10. After a 226 yard performance against Rutgers in the final week of the season, Allen increased his season total to 4,180 rushing yards.

Coming into the game, Allen needed 139 yards to break the record, and he smashed that goal, rushing for 160 yards and two touchdowns in the win.

Following the victory, Allen said he's leaned on football more than ever this season, using every snap as both an escape and a reminder of why he plays.

"Anytime I go out there, it reminds me how much I love football," Allen said after the game. "Anytime I step on the field, like I said the Iowa week, football keeps my mind off a lot of things.

"(It's) been a long year. Long, long season. Long year (with) my family, stuff like that. So whenever I play football, it keeps my mind off that. Just try to do it for my family, my mom and all the supporters."

In 12 games this season, Allen rushed 210 times for 1,303 yards for an average of 6.2 yards per carry. The senior back also led Penn State with 15 rushing scores and added 18 catches for 68 yards through the air.

While Allen was also five touchdowns away from breaking Saquon Barkley's record of 43 rushing scores, which he set from 2015-17, Allen's backfield mate and fellow senior Nicholas Singleton broke the record on Nov. 29. Singleton tied Barkley's record with two rushing touchdowns against Nebraska on Nov. 22

BIG

2025 Standings

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Indiana	9	0	1.000	12	0	1.000
Ohio State	9	0	1.000	12	0	1.000
Oregon	8	1	0.889	11	1	0.917
Michigan	7	2	0.778	9	3	0.750
USC	7	2	0.778	9	3	0.750
Iowa	6	3	0.667	8	4	0.667
Washington	5	4	0.556	8	4	0.667
Illinois	5	4	0.556	8	4	0.667
Minnesota	5	4	0.556	7	5	0.583
Nebraska	4	5	0.444	7	5	0.583
Northwestern	4	5	0.444	6	6	0.500
UCLA	3	6	0.333	3	9	0.250
Penn State	3	6	0.333	6	6	0.500
Rutgers	2	7	0.222	5	7	0.417
Wisconsin	2	7	0.222	4	8	0.333
Maryland	1	8	0.111	4	8	0.333
Michigan State	1	8	0.111	4	8	0.333
Purdue	0	9	0.000	2	10	0.167

Nov. 28 Games

Iowa 40, Nebraska 16
Indiana 56, Purdue 3

Nov. 29 Games

Ohio State 27, Michigan 9
Penn State 40, Rutgers 36
Oregon 26, Washington 14
Minnesota 17, Wisconsin 7
USC 29, UCLA 10
Michigan State 38, Maryland 28
Illinois 20, Northwestern 13

Dec. 6 Game

Big Ten Championship Game, Indianapolis,
Ohio State vs. Indiana, 8 p.m.

All times Eastern

before setting the program record with 45 after two more scores on the ground in the win over Rutgers.

Singleton has rushed 123 times for 549 yards and 13 rushing touchdowns this season, while adding 24 receptions for 219 yards and a score through the air. He currently ranks as Penn State's fourth all-time leading rusher with 3,461 yards on the ground.

12 B1G Teams Make Bowls

Following the clash between 5-6 Rutgers and Penn State, the Nittany Lions defeated the Scarlet Knights 40-36 to become the Big Ten's final bowl-eligible team.

Penn State is joined by 11 other Big Ten teams that crossed the six-win threshold in previous weeks to clinch bowl eligibility, including USC, Michigan, Washington, Iowa, Nebraska, Northwestern, Minnesota and Illinois. No. 1 Ohio State, No. 2 Indiana and No. 6 Oregon are likely set to represent the Big Ten in the College Football Playoff.

Along with the 12 Big Ten teams that reached the six-win mark, the conference also had eight teams win at least eight games and three teams that surpassed double-digit victories.

Bowl games will be announced Sunday, Dec. 7, after conference championship games and the revealing of the College Football Playoff bracket

OSU Defenseman Quietly Gets The Job Done

He's William, not Will Smith. There are enough of them in the world, but whatever you call the Ohio State junior defenseman, he is still trying to make a name for himself.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

Probably the most famous Will Smith is the slap-happy actor, but Southern California has a more recent hero by the same name in the Los Angeles Dodgers catcher who helped the team to World Series wins in 2020, '24 and '25.

Heck, there's even a hockey version of Will Smith, the No. 4 pick in the 2023 NHL draft by the San Jose Sharks, who at age 20 is considered one of the bright young stars.

The Buckeyes' William Smith (6-1, 195) is a dependable, non-flashy defenseman who occasionally chips in on the offense.

Through 14 games, he was third on the team with 17 blocks. He had two goals and an assist for three points and was even on the plus-minus ledger. In 82 career games, Smith had 14 points (six goals, eight assists).

"I think for me it's just play my game," he said. "When the points come, they come. But I think the main focus is just to win hockey games and be good as a group."

Coach Steve Rohlik likes Smith's consistency.

"That's him. He just goes out and does his business and works extremely hard," he said. "I think he's a phenomenal skater. I think that's his best asset."

"When you walk out of a game, and

you're really not mentioning his name, I actually think that's a really good thing, and I think a lot of players should feel that way. So, he's been a great addition. He just keeps plugging away and doing his thing."

Smith enjoys playing for the Buckeyes.

"I've had a great time here on the ice when it comes to hockey and school as well," he said. "It's a process just with your maturity and your confidence out there on the ice. The older you get, the more games you're put in, you're going to be more confident out there. You're going to be more comfortable."

"I think freshman year, especially with the fifth-year COVID-year players, you're playing against older guys. It was more of a challenge. I've grown more comfortable as I've gotten older, and just working on my craft, I think, has helped too with the maturity."



William Smith

He sees Ohio State as a perfect fit on and off the ice.

"The school's unreal, just to start there. Great coaches, great professors," he said. "It's a huge school with tons of history, and then just going to the hockey side of things, it's an elite program."

"They really care about you here. You've got everything you want here. And I think for my game too, it's a good fit for this

school, and it's a place where I can see myself developing and hopefully one day playing at the next level."

He is inspired by former teammate Damien Carfagna. The defenseman signed a two-year contract with the Edmonton Oilers as a free agent in April after completing his final season with the Buckeyes.

The Athletic's Allan Mitchell wrote this on Nov. 5 about Carfagna, who is playing for the Oilers' American Hockey League affiliate in Bakersfield, Calif.: "Damien Carfagna is a significant prospect signed out of college. He was late to the season

due to an injury, but he has played well in early games with the Condors. His stock is up slightly, owing mostly to time spent with AHL veteran Luke Prokop. Carfagna has talent. He will be a player to follow this season."

Smith began his studies as a communications major but switched to sports industry. He is a two-time Ohio State Scholar-Athlete and 2025 Academic All-Big Ten honoree.

"I liked communications, but I love hockey. I love sports," he said. "That's where my post-hockey career that I want to stay within that and whatever it may be, but that's something I plan on doing. I'm focusing on the player part of things right now, but after that, for sure I want something, whether it's an agent or coaching."

Being from Toronto, it's no surprise he started hockey at age 3 and is a fan of the hometown Maple Leafs, but he also likes the Washington Capitals because of all-time leading goal scorer Alex Ovechkin.

He didn't attend many Leafs games, though.

"I'd probably go to a couple a year," Smith said. "Leafs tickets are pretty expensive, so depending on maybe if my dad got them through work, we'd go. It was like a special occasion."

He stayed in Toronto through high school in his formative years of hockey, but when he was 18, he moved to Sioux City, Iowa, to play junior hockey for the Musketeers of the United States Hockey League.

"Juniors is different. I feel like hockey is one of the only sports where something like that happens," he said. "You definitely grow a lot through juniors. Playing youth hockey or living at home, you're getting home-cooked meals from your family, and then next thing you know, you're in Sioux City, Iowa, and an 18-hour drive away from

home, and things are totally different.

"But I got lucky with my billets and good organizations. They were great to me, but it's definitely a big change. It definitely prepares you for college, with the living away and the level of hockey. College is obviously a step above juniors, but it's the step right before that, and it definitely prepares you."

He finished his junior career in Omaha, Neb., before coming to Columbus.

Not Again

It was a painful weekend for the Buckeyes, even though they were in Tempe, Ariz., on Nov. 28 and 29. They lost both games to Arizona State in overtime – 3-2 and 4-3 – to run their losing streak to five games, with three of the defeats coming in OT.

The Buckeyes (5-9-0) have seven one-goal losses, four in overtime without a victory in the extra period.

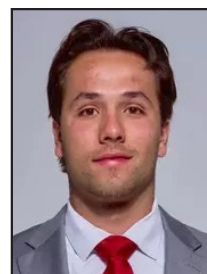
In the opener, Buckeye captain Davis Burnside, who calls Arizona home, had two goals,

but Cruz Lucious scored at 1:13 of OT. The next night, OSU built a 3-0 lead early in the third period on two goals by Adam Eisele and one from freshman Jake Karabela before the Sun Devils (7-8-1) scored three times in seven minutes, and Cullen Potter scored the winner with 19 seconds left in OT.

Next

The Buckeyes return to Big Ten play, hosting Minnesota at Value City Arena on Dec. 4 (7:30 p.m.) and Dec. 5 (6 p.m.). Both games are on BTN.

For a complete recap of the Arizona State series, go to the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



Adam Eisele



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Transfers Fishback, Stiles Settling In At OSU

Ohio State wrestling broke new ground this offseason when head coach Tom Ryan and his staff reached into the transfer portal for the first time in program history. The Buckeyes added two wrestlers via the portal – Dylan Fishback from NC State and Ethan Stiles from Oregon State, both of whom have jumped out to strong starts for Ohio State in 2025.

ON THE MAT Sam Cipriani

Competing at 184 pounds, Fishback was an All-American with the Wolfpack in 2023-24, compiling a 46-22 record on his way to qualifying for the NCAA tournament in two straight years.

Through his first 10 matches with Ohio State, Fishback was 8-2, with his only two losses to No. 1 Angelo Ferrari of Iowa and No. 3 Max McEnelly of Minnesota, both of which were takedowns in the sudden-victory period.

Fishback has earned wins against Wyoming's 11th-ranked Eddie Neitenbach and No. 8 Silas Allred of Nebraska at the 2025 National Duals Invitational, where he exorcised his demons from a loss to the Cornhusker in the 2025 NCAA tournament.

Ryan said Fishback's early surge has validated the staff's decision to turn to the portal.

"Fishback has been fantastic for us, which is nice," Ryan said. "He's an Ohio boy whose room as a little kid was plastered with Ohio State Buckeyes logos and colors in his room. He's a die-hard Buckeye. So he's really excited to be home, and he's gotten better."

Stiles has also been a consistent contributor for Ohio State in the 149-pound weight class. The Chicago native transferred to Ohio State after earning All-America honors at Oregon State in 2024, where he finished sixth nationally and was the Pac-12 runner-up.

Between Nebraska, where he wrestled for the 2023-24 season, and Oregon State (2024-25), Stiles entered the season with a 32-11 career record and three Pac-12 Wrestler of the Week awards. He is the only Pac-12 wrestler to ever win the honors at two weight classes (149, 157).

Stiles was 6-2 with the Buckeyes, including a 3-0 start in duals with wins over Minnesota's Jager Eisch, Nebraska's Nikade Zinkin by fall and No. 10 Ryder Block from Iowa.

Stiles opened his season with a 4-2 record in the Clarion Open for a fourth-place finish. In the event, he had two tech falls and a major-decision win but fell to No. 3 Jaxon Joy of Cornell and No. 19 Caleb Tyus of SIU Edwardsville.

Though Stiles has had a few early hiccups, Ryan said that's natural for a transfer adjusting to a new program, especially one with championship expectations. Ryan added that Stiles' goal in transferring was to test himself at the highest level, and with Ohio State sitting at 6-0 and ranked No. 2 in the country, both he and Fishback are getting that opportunity.

"Stiles, he's a great competitor," Ryan said. "Ethan wanted to be part of something really special. Not that Oregon State hasn't done a great job – their coaches have a done fantastic job rebuilding that program – but we're glad we got both him and Fishback."

Frosh Shaw Off To Promising Start

Only a month into his first collegiate season, freshman Maddox Shaw has burst onto the mat for Ohio State in 2025.

A product of Thomas Jefferson (Pa.), Shaw was the 27th-ranked wrestler in the class of 2025 according to FloWrestling. One of just three freshmen in Ohio State's most recent recruiting class, along with Brogan Fielding and Carson Mize, Shaw has been the most productive of the newcomers.

At 149 pounds, Shaw was out to a nearly perfect 7-1 record with just one lapse against Joy. The freshman actually fared slightly better against the highly ranked Joy than Stiles did, as the All-American was pinned by the Big Red wrestler, while Shaw lost by major decision, 11-1.

Ryan said the staff expected the highly touted Shaw to make an impact early, but his poise has still stood out in his time with the Buckeyes.

"Maddox loves the sport, and he was a very high-level prospect coming from one of the great wrestling states in the country," Ryan said. "He's got an older brother that wrestles. Wrestling is kind of ingrained in him, and he's a tough guy. We want to see him progress offensively. He's got really good speed and a really high technical understanding of the sport. Now it's just kind of freeing his mind to just go to attack more."

Bucks Stay Busy During Time Off

With 13 days between Ohio State's previ-

ous dual against Kent State and its match vs. Bellarmine on Dec. 3, Ryan and the Buckeyes had nearly two full weeks to recover and regroup.

Ryan said that no Ohio State wrestlers had significant injuries, though the break would give multiple wrestlers – including Luke Geog, who was injured in his first match against Wyoming's Joey Novak at the National Duals Invitational and had not wrestled since, time to get back to full form.

Ryan said he and the staff met on Nov. 24 to discuss how the team would go about its time off. While recovery was important, Ryan made it a point to make sure the Buckeyes avoided complacency or a sense of comfort setting in.

"Just because you have a gap doesn't mean you can become complacent," Ryan said. "This next four weeks is incredibly important to build our base of conditioning. We have to work on our ability to train at a threshold where you're on the brink, keeping them on the brink and having them sustain that. Once we come back from break, it's very hard to put consecutive training days together because you're competing so much."

Ohio State became the second-ranked team in the nation after a dominant team performance at the National Duals Invitionals. But Ryan still isn't satisfied.

Ryan said that though he currently felt like Ohio State was ahead of the pack, the Buckeyes still had much more work to do, with an off week being the perfect time to fine-tune

strengths and eliminate weaknesses.

Kilkeary Wins Findlay Open

While the majority of Ohio State's wrestlers traveled to Tulsa for the 2025 National Duals Invitational on Nov. 15-16, several Buckeyes competed in the Findlay Open on Nov. 15, including 125-pounder Vincent Kilkeary and 165-pounders T.J. Schierl and Patrick Downing.

Kilkeary returned to Columbus with a first-place finish at 125 pounds, winning all six of his matches and pinning his opponents in four of the six matches, and earning extra points in five.

Ryan said that though Kilkeary has struggled with minor injuries throughout his time at Ohio State, he can see the steady progression in the redshirt sophomore.

"Vinny won the Michigan State Open," Ryan said. "He's been riddled with minor injuries, which has slowed him down. As a program, we're in a really good spot at 125 pounds. We love Vinny. He's starting to heal. He's wrestling better and also pushing through some challenges. He has been a fantastic member of our team."

While Kilkeary took home first place at 125 pounds, 165-pounders Schierl and Downing finished in sixth and eighth place at their weight class, respectively. Schierl was 5-1 on the afternoon, and Downing split his bouts 3-3.



Dylan Fishback



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Buckeyes Own Wolverines in Ann Arbor

Ryan Day got a huge monkey off his back by leading his Buckeye troops to a dominating victory over archrival Michigan in a truly hostile environment in Ann Arbor on Nov. 29.

COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

It had been six years since the Buckeyes had tasted victory over the Wolverines. The Buckeyes gave the home team a shellacking in that game by a score of 56-27. Even though this year's game was not characterized by a number of explosive plays as it was in 2019, the 27-9 final couldn't have been any sweeter to a group of young men who had not won a pair of the coveted gold pants in their college careers.

This year's contest was more like a traditional Ohio State and Michigan matchup, where physicality, ball control and sound execution were the keys to which team would have bragging rights for the next 365 days.

The Buckeyes didn't play mistake-proof football, but they responded to adversity when something negative happened, and soon it became apparent that this

year, Ohio State was the better of the two teams. Beating "The Team Up North" for 2025 is mission accomplished.

Now the second goal for the season, winning the Big Ten championship in Indianapolis, becomes the focus. Ryan Day's "one game at a time" approach has worked to a charm so far, so I dare not mention the third goal until mission two is accomplished.

Sayin Impressive Once More

Ryan Day let everyone know that last year's strategy of not taking chances for fear of mistakes was not going to be the offensive game plan this year. Day decided, even with a redshirt freshman quarterback, that the Buckeyes would take advantage of all their skilled weapons on offense and be in attack mode for four quarters.

Only after the men of the Scarlet and Gray had displayed physical superiority over the Maize and Blue did Day decide to pound the Wolverines into submission by running the ball right down the throat of the Michigan defense. As the weather worsened, the Buckeyes got stronger, and the Wolverine defense had no answers to stopping the Buckeye assault.

Once more, quarterback Julian Sayin displayed the confidence and poise of a seasoned veteran. Even after throwing an interception on the first offensive series, Sayin handled the situation like a pro by

refusing to let it get him down.

He would throw three touchdowns for the day, complete over 70 percent of his passes, and convert 10 of 17 third-down situations. His leadership is extraordinary, and his numbers speak for themselves.

It is easy to understand why he is considered a contender for the Heisman Trophy despite being a first-year starter. Two very talented freshman quarterbacks faced off in Ann Arbor, and it was the Buckeye who clearly won the day.

Bucks Win Battle In The Trenches

Both Buckeye fronts won their battles against Michigan. After a quarter and a half of a back-and-forth slugfest between two big and physical offensive and defensive lines, the Buckeyes emerged as superior on both sides of the ball.

Offensively, despite not knocking the ball in the end zone from the 1-yard line in the first quarter of play, the line got better with each possession. The Buckeyes were able to run for 186 yards for the day and held the ball for twice as long as Michigan.

Four of the Buckeyes' scoring drives were of 10 plays or more, resulting in two touchdowns and two field goals. The final scoring drive that ate up nearly 12 minutes of play was the dagger to the heart of the Wolverines that they would not recover from as the sun set on any chance of a late Michigan comeback.

Once more, the offensive line kept Sayin clean in terms of pass protection, with no sacks for the Michigan defense on this day. As previously this season, Sayin had ample time in the pocket.

Defensively, the Buckeye front had success collapsing the pocket on pass plays and disengaging from blocks, then swarming to the football on runs. The Buckeyes took advantage of a young Michigan offensive interior in every way, something we have seen the majority of the time this season, but not so much against the Wolverines in recent years.

The Michigan offense had the ball for only 42 plays for the day. The Wolverines had only one drive of more than 10 plays. Most importantly, the Maize and Blue never crossed the Ohio State goal line the entire afternoon.

The defensive front of Ohio State, along with the coverage unit of the Buckeyes, allowed the Wolverines to convert only 1 of 9 third-down attempts.

Smith And Tate Set An Example

It would have been easy, and somewhat understandable, for Carnell Tate and Jeremiah Smith to take the day off due to being injured and with more games to play. How much they were hurting is something we do not know, but their starting the game had to be an inspiration to the entire team.

The rivalry is important to them, obviously. This type of unselfish attitude, the team attitude, is what being a Buckeye is all about traditionally. It's reassuring at a time in college football with the NIL and other factors that being a "team player" is

still a priority.

Even though neither player was 100 percent, their performances, their effort and their big-play abilities were again on display. Having, arguably, the two best receivers on one team in all of college football, along with a more than solid group of running backs and tight ends and a premier quarterback, is a real nightmare to opposing defenses. The Buckeyes simply have too much talent to stop for four quarters.

Patricia Inspires

Defensive coordinator Matt Patricia really has the pulse of the Buckeye defense in his hands. He has put together masterful game plans, and his players have executed them to perfection. The rivalry win was no exception.

Patricia's defense allowed the Wolverines to have the football for only four possessions and 18 total plays in the second half. Those four possessions ended with three punts and an interception. The Wolverine offense was not only shut out in the second half, but it netted a mere 39 yards.

Of course, the third- and fourth-quarter sustained drives by the Buckeye offense were a huge complement to the defensive shutdown.

Patricia has a deep connection to his players, and they have responded all season. It is apparent that he is an effective communicator, teacher and motivator.

His next test comes against the No. 2 team in the country with one of the nation's best quarterbacks in Fernando Mendoza. The task will not be easy, but I expect Patricia to have his troops ready to play.

Not Indiana of Old

Who would have thought the Buckeyes would be going up against the Indiana Hoosiers for the Big Ten championship? Who also would have thought that the two teams would be ranked No. 1 and No. 2 in the nation? Eat your heart out, SEC. After all, the Buckeyes lost a ton of players to the NFL after last season's national championship run, and Indiana has not won a Big Ten title since 1967.

Curt Cignetti has done one of the most impressive coaching and recruiting jobs in recent history. He has used the portal system masterfully and has put together a team that averages over 44 points per game, seven points more than the Buckeyes. At the same time, the Hoosiers give up under 11 points per game, about three more points than the Buckeyes allow.

Ohio State won the game last season against Indiana by a score of 38-15, but this is a new season, and expect both teams to be hungry to wear the Big Ten crown. A victory would be a program changer for Indiana. A win for the Buckeyes would be another huge step toward winning a back-to-back national championship. Both teams will make the playoffs no matter who wins, but winning the Big Ten championship is special in itself.



Bucks Stare Down Adversity, Roll Past Rivals

When Ohio State's Julian Sayin tossed an interception on the second play of the Buckeyes' first drive, you could almost hear Buckeye Nation scream in unison, "Not again!"

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

It is no secret that the Buckeyes came into this year's edition of The Game having dropped four in a row, in different ways but with one overarching storyline: not being tough enough to overcome adversity.

For four years, Michigan has hit the Buckeyes in the mouth, and for four years, the Buckeyes have failed to punch back.

It got bad enough that even though all of the numbers foretold a pretty comfortable Ohio State victory, there was still an underlying thought of having to see it to actually believe it.

So when Ohio State held Michigan to a field goal after the pick, putting the Wolverines up 6-0, it was time to make a statement, to show that this would indeed be a different year and a different team.

The Buckeyes scored on their next three drives, two of them touchdown passes from Heisman Trophy candidate Julian Sayin, to take a 17-9 halftime lead, and from that point it felt like Michigan was trailing by 28 points instead of eight.

Before the game, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day told FOX sideline reporter Jenny Taft, "We're going to come out attacking," and he was true to his word. The Buckeyes threw a pass on first down on five of their first six possessions and took enough downfield shots that Michigan could not find any consistent footing on defense.

Sayin and the Buckeyes had not really faced adversity this season, and when Michigan led 6-0, it was the biggest deficit the Buckeyes have faced. Once Ohio State took a comfortable two-score lead, it reverted to the plan that had served Michigan so well the past four seasons – leaning on its backfield.

The Buckeyes ran the football on 16 of 19 plays in a clock-chewing drive that resulted in a field goal to put them up 27-9 with just over eight minutes to play. Freshman running back Bo Jackson had 24 yards on four carries on that drive and finished the day with 117 yards on 22 carries, his sixth 100-yard rushing game of the season. He was also instrumental in the passing game, catching four balls for 49 yards. His ability to make people miss, which was missing early in the season, has been a huge reason for his surge in production.

In last year's shocking 13-10 victory by Michigan in Columbus, Ohio State was a victim of its own hubris, sticking with the run far too often on first down and getting behind the chains. It left a lot of work to convert third downs and proved to be too much for the Buckeyes to overcome. OSU was much better in that regard this time around, converting 10 of 17 third downs and exert-

ing its will for all but a few minutes of the first quarter.

There were some anxious moments from Ohio State fans in the days leading up to the game as they were uncertain about the status of star receivers Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate. Both had missed time late in the season, and though the buzz was that they would play, OSU fans did not breathe a sigh of relief until they jogged onto the Michigan Stadium turf on the Buckeyes' first series. Each came up big, Smith snagging a 35-yard touchdown and Tate waltzing in on a 50-yarder.

The Buckeyes' defense was able to keep ballyhooed Michigan freshman quarterback Bryce Underwood under wraps, limiting him to 8-of-18 passing and just 1 rushing yard on six carries. It was evident early that Michigan was not going to be able to win the game with offense, and as the clock inexorably ticked down closer to triple zeros and a Buckeyes victory, fans began filing out of the Big House. Ohio State certainly looks like the nation's most complete football team.

Ohio State gets its long-awaited trip to Indianapolis, where it will try to secure its first Big Ten title since 2020, and with it is a mano a mano battle between Sayin and Indiana quarterback Fernando Mendoza, seen as the top two Heisman candidates.

As Ohio State converted on fourth down from its own 38 with under four minutes to play on a simple dive play, Day let out a huge sigh of relief, a smile and a fist pump. He knows his team did it with toughness and brawn, which made the win extra special.

Whether or not this is the beginning of a winning streak that favors the Buckeyes, the victory tastes extra sweet simply because it had been so long in coming.

Normalcy has been restored.

Showing Restraint

There was some talk going into the game that, should the Buckeyes win, they might want to do what Michigan did last year in Ohio Stadium and plant a flag at midfield.

Let me say that one, winning allows you to have bragging rights and do what you want to do, and two, it's a juvenile thing to do.

So it was nice to see Day hustling his team back to the locker room and telling U-M coach Sherrone Moore that they were not going to plant the flag.

What's the old adage about acting like you've been there before?

"I thought, as you can imagine, over the years, after winning this game, what I would say in the press conference, and I'm going to save all of those comments because I think the best thing to do is win with humility and that's what we are going to do," Day said. "It speaks to our program, and it speaks to what it means to be a Buckeye."

There seemed to be a thought in Buckeye Nation that Day did not care about this game, that he was lumping it in with all of the others the way that John Cooper used to. He kept the routine during the week the same, even deciding to fly to Michigan rather than bus, as has been the usual mode of transport over the years.

Nothing could be further from the truth. "Nobody wants to win this game more

than me," Day said. "To win this game, it's just a great moment. It's one of those moments that you want to just grab on for a while and just enjoy it."

Catch Or No Catch

There was a lot of debate about the touchdown catch that shouldn't have been, a 35-yard strike from Sayin to Smith that put Ohio State up 10-6 early in the second quarter.

Smith beat Michigan's single coverage – which, by the way, was a bad idea – and hauled in a pretty throw from Sayin and rambled across the goal line. On the way, he seemed to bobble the ball and not regain control until he stepped out of bounds. The officials huddled and said there was no conclusive evidence to overturn the touchdown call made on the field, though it seemed that there was.

My problem is not whether it was a touchdown.

My issue is with the rule itself.

First off, the fact that a fumble in the end zone is ruled a touchback and goes over to the opponent may be the stupidest rule in football. Every other fumble that leaves the field of play returns to the fumbling team. Second, the ball never left Smith's grasp – so how could it have been ruled a fumble? If someone wants to say it was a bobble, that's fine. But he never dropped the ball, and by rule, a fumble has to leave the player's possession.

Smith's did not.

Heisman Moment

A lot has been made about players and "Heisman Moments," and while it's a dumb narrative, it is easy to see why it is done: to fuel debate.

A few weeks ago, Mendoza had his "moment" when he threw a late game-winning pass to push the Hoosiers past Penn State. The problem is that he was the reason Indiana was in a hole in the first place, with poor play for three quarters. A guy shouldn't

be rewarded for having a game with mostly bad play and a clutch moment late.

Sayin rebounded nicely from an early interception and was his usual steady self, finishing with three touchdown passes and 233 yards. After the game, J-Cool deflected praise to his protectors.

"All season long, they've just had an edge to them and played nasty," he said. "We hand it off; we get 7 yards. You see guys getting thrown on the ground, it looks like carnage out there."

The performance in a big game vaulted Sayin to the top of this scribe's Heisman list, and if he repeats his Michigan performance against Indiana, he will all but sew up the prestigious award.

Dandy Dozen

The final weekend of the regular season was largely devoid of chaos, except in the ACC, which has been chaotic all season.

Most teams that needed to win did so, which means that there was not much movement in the rankings. The only real stunner was unbeaten Texas A&M falling to Texas, though folks who delve into analytics were not nearly as surprised as the Longhorns had a roster advantage and had been doing the things that win football games. They had just been the victims of poor football luck a few too many times.

Anyway, this is the final ranking before the postseason begins.

1. Ohio State (12-0)
2. Indiana (12-0)
3. Georgia (11-1)
4. Oregon (11-1)
5. Texas Tech (11-1)
6. Alabama (10-2)
7. BYU (11-1)
8. Texas A&M (11-1)
9. Ole Miss (11-1)
10. Oklahoma (10-2)
11. Vanderbilt (10-2)
12. Texas (9-3)



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U-M Proved To Be Pretender Not Contender

In the end, the Ohio State football team reminded me of a boxer. Sometimes at the start of a prize fight, a fighter has to take a couple of shots, taste a bit of his own blood before he is loose and ready to show who is the champ. Michigan threw some good shots to open the bout, but Ohio State's superior talent in virtually all phases of the game ultimately allowed the Buckeyes to take charge.

I really believe that a turning point came in those early minutes. The Wolverines opened the game with a 36-yard run by Jordan Marshall, landing a haymaker on the first punch thrown, and drove 48 yards to the Buckeye 27. But Matt Patricia's top-ranked defense stiffened and forced a field goal.

On Ohio State's second play from scrimmage, Heisman hopeful Julian Sayin tossed a surprising interception, only his fifth of the season, giving the Wolverines outstanding field position at the OSU 39 and revving up the mostly partisan crowd of 111,373. Michigan moved the chains once, but the defense again stiffened and forced yet another field goal.

Two bad moments and the Buckeyes were down just 6-0.

If the Wolverines had scored two touchdowns in the first 10 minutes, their arrogance and confidence gained from four straight victories over their rivals would have kicked in, and the doubts created from those same four games – especially last year's contest – would have started to creep in for the Buckeyes. I know they started to creep in for me.

Instead, Ohio State was just one score away from taking the lead with nearly 50 minutes still to play. After that early sparring, superior talent took over, and the Buckeyes outscored their rivals 27-3 the rest of the way. I don't think the final score really indicates how dominant Ohio State was.

But before it was time for all of us to celebrate, we had to survive what was, for me at least, one of the few disappointing moments of the game.

The Buckeyes showed that they were over any early jitters and were ready to make it a battle by marching 72 yards to first-and-goal at the 3. Ohio State took a couple of shots and lost 2 yards but got a gift when Jaishawn Barham head-butted an official, giving the Buckeyes a new set of downs at the 2.

Let me interrupt this dialogue right here and ask how you can head-butt an official and not be tossed out of the game? If a Buckeye had done that, they would not only have been tossed but probably thrown in jail for assault. I guess it's all part of playing for America's cheaters – I mean America's team.

But that's not what bugged me – well it did, but that's not what *really* bugged me. Ohio State took three more shots and still couldn't cross the goal line. *That* bugged me. Ryan Day was ready to go for it on fourth down, but a classic Buckeye costly penalty forced a Jayden Fielding field goal to cut the lead to 6-3. It was pretty much smooth sailing after that – dominant smooth sailing.

However, I have a couple of lingering concerns. The Buckeyes' continuing problems in the red zone or their knack for penalties at inopportune times could come back to haunt them as the competition gets stiffer in the postseason.

Taking three points instead of seven can be costly. Just ask Michigan.

Who Is Physical Now?

There was a brief moment early in the game, I don't remember when exactly, when I was concerned that maybe Michigan was demonstrating that they really were more physical than Ohio

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

State, the obsession of Ryan Day and the departed Chip Kelly. Maybe it was when the Wolverine defense was stymying the Buckeyes at the goal line, as referenced above. We'll never know if Ohio State could have scored, because of that unfortunate false-start penalty that led to the Fielding field goal and the 6-3 Buckeye deficit.

Fast-forward to the late third and early fourth quarters.

Is there anything more physical and demoralizing to the opposition than a 20 play, 81-yard drive that started way back at the Buckeye 14? The drive finally petered out at the Michigan 5. Sure, it would have been even more effective if Ohio State had driven all the way to a touchdown. But even with only three points on another Fielding field goal to make it 27-9, the damage was done as the Buckeyes gobbled up 11:56 in time in lousy weather, leaving the rivals to try to score three times against the vaunted OSU defense with just 8:10 to play.

The wind may not have been out of Michigan Stadium, but it was out of Michigan's sails.

The Wolverines had the ball two more times but managed only minus-6 yards on three plays and 5 yards on four plays, ending with a Davison Igbinosun interception.

That lengthy drive alone makes me believe that Ohio State dominated the game far more than the 27-9 final score may indicate. The drive reminded me of the Penn State game last season, when Ohio State ran out the final 5:13 with 11 straight running plays to secure the 20-13 victory. That was another display of brute force and pushed James Franklin that much closer to the Penn State door.

Moving back to this year's display of force, CJ Donaldson didn't score one of his trademark touchdowns against the Wolverines, but he was a big, bruising part of the lengthy, game-sealing drive, and the mini time-chewing drive (seven plays, 17 yards, 3:33) that followed. Donaldson is no Beanie Wells (39 carries, 222 yards, two TDs in bad weather at Michigan in 2007), but I think he was a solid pickup out of West Virginia. He finished his first Ohio State Michigan game with 14 carries for 44 yards.

In other physical stats, the Buckeye offensive line did not allow a sack. In fact, Sayin was rarely even threatened. Ohio State pounded out 47 carries for 186 yards. The line and the team seemed to get stronger as the afternoon wore on. Throw in a little bit of finesse (Carnell Tate and Jeremiah Smith both had long touchdowns) and you have a really good offense.

Sayin gave a lot of credit to the offensive line and how it was able to create space for runners throughout the game.

"That was awesome to see, the physicality that the runners ran with and the offensive line had," he said. "We wanted to end the game on our terms, keep running the ball, milk the clock, pick up the first downs and wear the defense down. Those guys up front did a really good job."

And speaking of getting stronger, the defense did not allow a point in the second half and gave up just 39 total yards in the final 30 minutes. They also got some good (physical) hits in along the way.

Jackson Comes Of Age

I'm not ashamed to admit that I was not completely sold on Bo Jackson – at least to be the lead dog in an important, physical game like The Game. It seems like all that work he got in

the previous three games against lesser defenses such as Purdue, UCLA and Rutgers paid off. Against Michigan he carried the mail 22 times for 117 yards. I liked the fact that he had only one negative yard and had a long of 36. But there's more. He also had four catches for 49 yards and a long of 23. Just one more weapon for Sayin to utilize in an offense of many weapons. Even Matt Patricia might have problems trying to defend Ohio State.

Over the last five games Jackson has carried 83 times for 519 yards, good for a 6.3-yard average. For a 12-game regular season that would project out to 199 carries for 1,246 yards. In terms of being the lead dog, here are some numbers over the last five games that might be significant. Against Penn State, Jackson carried 13 times; against Purdue, 14 times; against UCLA, 15 times; vs. Rutgers 19 times; and against rival Michigan, 22 times – more carries each game. As a point of comparison, last season TreVeyon Henderson averaged nine carries a game and Quinshon Judkins averaged 12. In 2019, the year J.K. Dobbins ran for 2,003 yards, he averaged 22 carries a game.

Current Win One More Memory

In the week leading up to The Game, someone asked on our BuckeyeSports.com Forum for readers to share their favorite Michigan game memories. My answer may have been a bit unique:

"This is a long time ago, but I am going to say 1981 when Vaughn Broadnax blocked multiple Wolverines to help Art Schlichter score the winning touchdown," I wrote. "I guess it makes such an impression on me because that was our first year of BSB and we were a winner.

"More recently, I loved the 2018 game. The 62-39 score doesn't do justice to the butt-kicking the Buckeyes administered to the #4 Wolverines."

For whatever reasons, of all the Michigan games we've covered, our readers seemed to have enjoyed that 2018 win the most, and that includes the 2006 "Game of the Century" where No. 1 Ohio State played No. 2 Michigan.

As time moves on, I will be curious to see how the 2025 game, another one where the score does not do the butt-whopping justice and with the added highlight of snapping the four-game losing streak, fares among Michigan memories for Buckeye fans.

I believe we have covered 45 Ohio State-Michigan games at BSB. Well, probably 44 when you consider the COVID year, where Jim Harbaugh wimped out on playing the Buckeyes. I noted on that same Forum thread that his decision not to play the game was one of the wisest moves he ever made as Michigan coach. It was a game the Wolverines would probably have lost.

Instead, he broke Ryan Day's momentum and he broke Ohio State's momentum by not playing The Game. Throw in a little cheating and he and the team were off and running.

Championship Coverage Online

It's been a while since Ohio State has been in the Big Ten Championship Game, so some of you may have forgotten the drill. Coverage of the game against Indiana in Indianapolis is *online only* at our BuckeyeSports.com website. Stories will start to post immediately following the end of the game and will continue to post through the evening and into the following day.

For those of you who have been reluctant to read any of Buckeye Sports Bulletin's electronic offerings, now would be a great time to start. For simple instructions – if I can do it, you can do it – email us at subscriptions@buckeyesports.com with your preferred email address and we will send you simple instructions on how to access the site, including reading the complete edition of the print Buckeye Sports Bulletin on the same day it is published. The next print edition of BSB (Dec. 20 cover date) will be mailed Dec. 16 and will preview the playoffs and cover football recruiting's early signing period.

Why is there no print coverage of the Big Ten championship? We only have 24 issues annually to allot, and as the last several years have proven, it would not be prudent to allot one of those issues to a game in which the Buckeyes don't always play.

Those of you who are not taking advantage of BuckeyeSports.com are not getting full value for your subscription dollar. And I would love to interact with you, along with other readers and staff members, on the Forum. We can even talk about how to best use our 24 issues.

Three For One Savings

I wanted to remind you about our Holiday-Three-For-One special, one of our most popular promotions of each 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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Belated Thanksgiving Wishes

Thanksgiving was my late mother's favorite holiday, and I guess it is mine now too. What's not to like about a holiday where we spend time with family, we are thankful – and of course we eat really good food.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is a family – the subscribers, the staff, past staff, our many wonderful vendors, some of whom who have been with us since our humble beginning in 1981.

These can be tough times at BSB. The newspaper industry is difficult in general, but it has been a special challenge here at BSB with the problems we have faced with mail delivery. I wanted to give special thanks to all the readers who have given us special support.

Thank you to the VIPs, our most generous donors. Thanks to the readers who pay full price when they have been offered a discount. Thanks to those of you whose subscription doesn't run out for a couple of years, but tack on another year or two to show financial and moral support. And to those of you who don't have the resources to throw in something extra, thank you for scraping up the money to keep on reading BSB.

And thank you to all of you who have put up with my crankiness in this column and over the phone, if you are unlucky enough to have me answer.

Thank you, thank you, thank you. I hope all of you had as peaceful a Thanksgiving as Heidi and I did.

And a final big thank you to Ryan Day and the guys. What a way to cap off the holiday weekend.

As Jackie Gleason would have said, "How sweet it is."