

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 37, No. 19

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

April 7, 2018

In The Hunt



COURTESY OF OSU ATHLETICS

NEXT IN LINE – Junior Joe Burrow (10), sophomore Dwayne Haskins (7) and redshirt freshman Tate Martell (18) are competing to be Ohio State's starting QB.

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OSU Quarterback Race Still Wide Open

By **TIM MOODY**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

John, Ross or Chuck.

One of those three will be the starting quarterback for Ohio State in 2018, not J.T. Barrett. But in those names alone, Barrett's legacy can still be felt in Columbus.

John, of course, is Joe Burrow, a rising junior who is on track to graduate this spring. Ross is Dwayne Haskins, a third-year sophomore who became an Ohio State legend when he led the Buckeyes to a comeback win over Michigan in place of an injured Barrett just a few months ago. Chuck is the redshirt freshman Tate Martell, who has earned early fame with a confident personality on the field and on social media.

The nicknames stem from Burrow's freshman year in 2015. Barrett – or Joe Thomas Barrett, who spent that season in what seemed like a week-to-week battle with Cardale Jones, decided there was room for only one Joe among the signal callers, so he opted to call the new guy John instead. The following year, Haskins arrived, and Burrow gave him the nickname of Ross – it's not a reference to David Schwimmer's character on the popular TV show "Friends," though.

Last spring, Martell arrived, and he was dubbed Chuck by his teammates.

For what it's worth, early enrollee quarterback Matthew Baldwin, a four-star recruit out of Lake Travis in Austin, Texas, has been nicknamed Burt – although the correct spelling is as yet unconfirmed.

Now Barrett – the original nickname-giver – is gone after a record-setting career with the Buckeyes, and one of his former teammates will take his place.

This spring serves as an open competition, according to the coaching staff, so they'll all get their chance.

"The guys are working hard, and we're splitting up the reps," offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Ryan Day said March 22. "Right now, we've only had two (full) practices under our belts with pads on. So it's really early and we're still installing stuff, but the guys are working at it, they're working on trying to get better at it. That's really our focus right now."

Each of the three quarterbacks brings a different skill set to the table.

Burrow, who has the most experience in the program, blends solid running ability with an above-average arm. Haskins is less mobile, but he has the strongest arm on the team and can make throws the other two can't. Martell is an X-factor with the ball in his hands, showcasing the ability to extend plays and make players miss, while he has an adequate arm as well.

Not only are Burrow, Haskins and Martell different from each other, but they all bring a skill set to the table that hardly compares to Barrett. The latter was a distributor who utilized his experience, leadership and rushing ability to lead the Buckeyes. On paper, at least, the three competing now have much more physical talent. How that translates into the Ohio state offense is still an unknown.

"Nobody is quite like Tate or Joe or Dwayne," Day said. "Again, that's what we're working on right now. I would say that when you look at Tate's running ability, he's maybe a little bit quicker than J.T. J.T. was a little bit thicker, stronger and had really good running skills."

"Joe is kind of like that. He's a big, strong guy who has worked great in the weight room. When you defend Joe, he can run, he can throw, he can do a lot

Continued On Page 8

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

We're continuing to poll our readers in an attempt to rank the best quarterbacks in Ohio State history. Although we're keeping the polling results close to the vest so far, here are some comments from BSB subscribers who have shared their opinions with us. If you haven't voted, a ballot appears on page 8.

I agonized over this list. It took me weeks to finally rank my list, but it was fun nevertheless. For what it was worth, who knows who was the best because they all had their moments and failures. In my mind, they were all great players who wore the scarlet and gray! Go Bucks!

– **John Simmons, 72**

If Joe Germaine would have had Jim Tressel or Urban Meyer he would have been great.

– **Lyle Gray, 70**

I feel Cornelius Greene should be considered one of Ohio State's greatest quarterbacks. He was the quarterback of the 1973, 1974 and 1975 Ohio State football teams. He had a record of 31-3-1. He won three Big Ten championships, he didn't lose to Michigan and beat a great Southern California team, 42-21, in the Rose Bowl. "Corny" was Rose Bowl MVP in 1974 and Big Ten MVP in 1975. He won these awards over backfield buddy Archie Griffin,

who won the Heisman Trophy in 1974 and 1975.

– **Mike Cowgill, 71**

1. Don Unverferth married my sixth-grade teacher at the time and broke all the guys' hearts! Don came to our sixth-grade field at Brookside Elementary and threw the ball around with us! Great guy.

2. Art Schlichter. I loved Art's swagger and athletic ability. When he was in the game, I always felt OSU was going to win.

– **Bill Ludwig, 62**

In my opinion, the 1998 team was the best team I have witnessed, and in turn, Joe Germaine was the best quarterback in history. He always seemed well prepared, and thus he went through his progressions quickly, made timely and accurate throws to the receivers as they completed their routes, and exhibited notable poise while in the pocket.

– **J.D. Wientjes, 60**

From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1983

After ending the 1980-81 season 14-13, the Ohio State men's basketball team surprised many by finishing second in the Big Ten for a second straight year in 1982-83. What made the feat even more astonishing was the fact that the Buckeyes went 20-10 and nearly topped defending national champion North Carolina in the East Regional semifinals of the NCAA Tournament on March 25 without Clark Kellogg, who left for the pros following the 1981-82 campaign.

At least one person, however, wasn't surprised by what the program was able to accomplish over the last two years – head coach Eldon Miller.

"I didn't have any special feelings about the season," he said. "We expect to win all the time."

30 Years Ago – 1988

Chosen ninth overall in the 1986 NBA draft by the Chicago Bulls, former Ohio State standout Brad Sellers was gradually making his presence felt in his second season as a professional. He had started the majority of games at power forward for the Bulls, who were gearing up for the playoffs.

"I knew it would take some time for me to blend in here," said Sellers, who racked up 1,960 points and 1,153 rebounds during his four collegiate seasons, the first two at Wisconsin. "I came off the bench at first last year, and then I broke into the starting lineup. It was an easy adjustment since I left Ohio State."

25 Years Ago – 1993

When spring practice began March 31, Ohio State football head coach John Cooper had the tall task of replacing 17 seniors who used their final year of eligibility in 1992, as well as 10 players who had started in the Florida Citrus Bowl just three months prior.

"The main focus of this spring will be replacing the graduating seniors, getting the players lined up in positions where they will be next fall," Cooper told BSB. "We don't anticipate many, if any, personnel changes. You may see a subtle change such as moving a defensive tackle to defensive

end, or maybe someone from inside to outside linebacker or maybe from safety to corner. Other than that, there won't be many changes."

20 Years Ago – 1998

One year removed from going 12-25-2, the Ohio State men's hockey team had a remarkable turnaround season in 1997-98 that resulted in a trip to college hockey's Frozen Four. The Buckeyes' miracle run, however, ended with a 5-2 loss to Boston College on April 2 in Boston.

Despite the unfavorable outcome, OSU finished the year 27-13-2, including an 18-2-1 stretch that propelled the squad to the NCAA national semifinal game.

"It was one of the greatest rides the kids will ever be on," said OSU head coach John Markell. "It's our senior leadership that came through in the end and showed us the way to do it. They became great leaders."

15 Years Ago – 2003

It was only fitting that spring practice began on April 3, exactly three months to the day after the Buckeyes won the national championship at the Fiesta Bowl. While the date allowed OSU fans to look back fondly on one of the school's signature moments, head coach Jim Tressel didn't spend any time reflecting on what the program had recently accomplished.

"You're working on what lies ahead," Tressel said. "If you get caught looking back too much at what you've done in the past, somebody is going to pass you by."

10 Years Ago – 2008

As spring practice began on March 27, one of the goals the Ohio State football team set for itself was winning another Big Ten championship. The Buckeyes had won at least a share of the last three league crowns, including back-to-back outright titles in 2006 and '07.

They were trying to become the first program in Big Ten history to win three consecutive outright titles.

"I think everyone pretty much knows those are our goals," said OSU senior cornerback Malcolm Jenkins. "That's why

you come to Ohio State. But every team sets big goals for themselves at the beginning of the season. Setting goals is easy. Achieving them is where the hard work comes in, and that begins in the spring."

Five Years Ago – 2013

Following a 2012-13 campaign that ended in an eighth-place finish in the Big Ten at 7-9, 18-13 overall, Jim Foster's time as the Ohio State women's basketball head coach came to a close on March 19.

While accruing a 279-82 record and winning an unprecedented six consecutive Big Ten regular-season championships from 2005-10 during his 11 seasons in Columbus, Foster's lack of success in the NCAA tournament ultimately led to his ouster. Seven of his 10 teams failed to survive the first weekend of the tourney, which left OSU associate athletic director Mieshelle Willis and athletic director Gene Smith convinced a change was needed.

"We evaluate the program every year," Willis said. "We strive to be nationally competitive and believe we have everything in place here to be nationally competitive. We believe that means we should be deep into the postseason, so that's what went into the decision."

One Year Ago – 2017

In a video obtained by TMZ Sports, former Ohio State running back Ezekiel Elliott, who was selected fourth overall by the Dallas Cowboys in the 2016 NFL draft, was spotted pulling down the shirt of a woman who was standing next to him on the roof of a Dallas bar while celebrating at a local St. Patrick's Day parade on March 13.

This act by Elliott, who was under investigation by the NFL for an alleged incident of domestic violence, triggered a sharp reaction from former Buckeye linebacker Chris Spielman.

"I want people to stop saying he's a 'young man,' " Spielman told TMZ of Elliott, who was 21 at the time. "There comes a point in time when we all know right from wrong. At what point is it OK to pull some woman's shirt down in public?"

Grandchildren Can Put Things In Perspective

Yes, Dad would have certainly let me know I was entering the world fresh off a national championship.

So Many Things To Tell

Naturally, I wondered if my new grandson would grow to have the same kind of affinity for Ohio State football that my father passed on to me and that I have fostered these past six decades.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

How many undefeated seasons will he celebrate? How many national championships? How many new traditions will be spawned during his lifetime? As he lay in my arms, his entire lifetime ahead of him, I wanted to tell him about Ohio State and the kind of passion the football program stirs within its fan base.

I want to tell him that to understand the relationship Ohio State football fans have with their team is to understand the basic tenets of a love story. Entire generations have been weaned on scarlet and gray, and when it is their turn, they pass the folklore and traditions on to the next. It's nearly impossible to be anything but a diehard fan because there's no such thing as a casual follower of the Buckeyes.

I want him to know how it was in my house while I was growing up. My love for all things scarlet and gray came from my father – little Matthew's great-grandfather, who was a proud 1940 graduate of The Ohio State University.

It's not difficult to conjure up memories of Dad tinkering in the back yard on a football Saturday with the radio tuned to the game and the soothing tones of Bert Charles and Marv Homan filling the crisp October air.

The first season I truly remember came in 1968 – a pretty good year for any fan to cut his teeth on the Buckeyes – when I followed the exploits of Jack Tatum, Jim Stillwagon, Jim Otis, Ted Provost and Rex Kern (my personal favorite), turning what began as a simple pastime into a week-to-week obsession. My memory still has a vivid picture of that Rose Bowl game against the University of Southern California and the rising jubilation of a second-half Ohio State comeback after O.J. Simpson had staked the Trojans to an early 10-0 lead.

My favorite team won every game that season and was crowned national champions. Naturally, I thought undefeated seasons and Rose Bowl victories were a birthright, especially when the Buckeyes won every game in 1969 before suffering a crushing upset in the season finale at Michigan. Nearly five decades later, that one still stings.

I want to impress upon my grandson how Ohio State football has been equated to a religion, and how it's hard to argue that point. If you look at it via that context, Ohio Stadium is the cathedral, "Across the Field" and "Carmen Ohio" are the hymns, and the national championship continues to be the holy grail. Coaches such as Earle Bruce and Jim Tressel are viewed as disciples of the legendary Woody Hayes, and while the exploits of long-gone players such as Chic Harley and Wes Fesler have been reduced to ancient texts in dusty corners of little-used

libraries, their stories continue to be told and retold down through the years.

I want him to know about Brutus and Sloopy, the Horseshoe and "The Best Damn Band in the Land." I want him to know about Gold Pants and Senior Tackle and a thousand more traditions that make Ohio State football what it is.

I want my grandson to know that Ohio State football is largely about the fans. The tall ones and the small ones. The young and the old. Those who can buy anything they want, and those who struggle paycheck to paycheck. The ones who have season tickets, and the ones who have never laid their eyes on Ohio Stadium. The ones who go to the most far-flung corner of the globe to yell "O-H!" just because they know someone will answer back with a hearty "I-O!"

I want my grandson to understand that Ohio State has story upon story about its glorious past, and he can tell and retell each of those stories as if the listener is hearing them for the first time.

I want to tell him that, among Buckeye fans anywhere at any time, you can always relive the greatest victories, revisit the championship seasons, and recall the wizardry and artistry of Archie and Woody, Vic and Hopalong, Eddie and Zeke, and every other player who took an otherwise tranquil autumn afternoon along the Olentangy River and turned it into a rollicking thrill ride.

As he lay in my arms, making the cooing sounds that babies make, I wanted so much to make him understand that the bond Ohio State football fans share is one that can never be broken. It's a bond that recalls with fondness cherished memories that last through the years. The images we have of favorite games or players may flicker in our minds over time, but they never leave our hearts.

I also want to tell little Matthew about the special people who make Ohio State football what it is.

I doubt I will ever forget something former head coach Earle Bruce told me last spring. The coach was just a month or two past his 86th birthday, and although his manner had slowed a bit – I didn't know at the time that he would soon receive a diagnosis of being in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease – the underlying fiery nature of his personality was definitely still there and his memories were very much intact.

Perhaps no other Ohio State football figure in history has been more misunderstood or mistreated over the years, but none of that has ever diminished Bruce's love for his alma mater. He has always been a master storyteller, sprinkling his recollections with enough salty language and verbosity to keep his audience entertained for as long as they cared to listen.

When I asked about such things as what he thinks his legacy might be, however, the old coach resorted to plain language.

"As far as I'm concerned," Bruce told me, "the only legacy I've got on the football field is that I beat Michigan five out of nine times against Bo – and he's the best coach they ever had. And I beat him three times up there, which made it really nice."

"If you want to talk about a legacy, I guess that's the one I'm most proud of. That, and being a Buckeye. I've been a Buckeye since the first time I walked on campus and saw that beautiful stadium, and by golly, I'll be a Buckeye until the day I die."

I can't wait to tell my grandson about Earle Bruce and Woody Hayes and Chic Harley and so much more.

Dwayne Haskins? Tate Martell? Joe Burrow perhaps?

Sure, I want to know who is going to start this fall at quarterback for Ohio State just as much as you do, but I have more important things on my mind at the present time. As I write this in Germantown, Tenn., a suburb of Memphis, I am only a few hours removed from one of the most thrilling moments of my life.

Matthew Vincent Ross entered this world shortly before 5:30 p.m. Central Daylight Time on March 29, making me a grandfather for the first time.

I was lucky enough to enjoy four grandparents while I was growing up, but I always thought they were terribly old. Almost prehistoric, in fact. A little checking through the family genealogy, however, and I found that when I was born, they were just a few years older than I am right now. But I can tell you unequivocally, I do not feel old. I feel rejuvenated.

Sit and stare into the cherubic face of a human being only a few hours old and whatever problems you think you might have had simply melt away. As I held my grandson for the first time, it brought back memories of how I did the same when my daughter was born more than 30 years ago. Then, to ponder the fact that I was holding my baby's baby – well, someone once described that feeling as heaven on earth, and I think that pretty well sums it up.

I looked around the room and saw my daughter, who has always been my little girl. Suddenly, though, I saw a young woman transformed almost instantaneously into a mother. When she graduated with honors from New York University, she was still my little girl. The same thing when she got married and two days later received her Ph.D. in psychology from Ohio State. But when she became a mother – that's when, at least in my eyes, my baby achieved full adulthood.

I held my newborn grandson and wondered about all of the magnificent mischief he will find his way into and out of. I couldn't help but also ponder my own life as I hurtle inexorably toward my 60th birthday. As I sat in the antiseptic environment of the nursery at Methodist Le Bonheur (translation: happiness) Germantown Hospital, I pictured my own father awaiting my birth in 1958. He was likely smoking a cigarette while sequestered in a far-off waiting room with other expectant fathers.

I wonder what my dad would have wanted to tell me at that instant.

My dad was a sports fan, so he probably would have wanted me to know that the New York Yankees were on their way to another World Series title, the St. Louis Hawks would win their first and still the franchise's only NBA championship, the Montreal Canadiens were in the middle of a run of five consecutive Stanley Cups, and the Baltimore Colts were about to embark upon an NFL championship season that would culminate in a victory against the New York Giants in the title game, a sudden-death contest – the first in league history – that featured a dozen future Pro Football Hall of Fame players and became known as "The Greatest Game Ever Played."

Dad would also have let me know that Ohio State was coming off a national football championship season in 1957. It was a campaign that began with an 18-14 loss to TCU in the season opener before the Buckeyes finished with nine consecutive victories, including a 31-14 win against Michigan and a 10-7 Rose Bowl victory against Oregon.



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Charter Member

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Borland Out Until September With Achilles Injury

Ohio State football coach Urban Meyer announced April 2 after the team's spring practice that sophomore linebacker Tuf Borland is expected to be out until sometime in September with an Achilles injury. The coach added that Borland is ahead of the curve when it comes to healing from this ailment because the player is, fittingly enough, tough.

"The normal guy takes longer than a guy like him, so we're anticipating September," Meyer said.

The news comes one week after Meyer said he did not expect Borland's 2018 season to be jeopardized because of the injury. OSU begins the 2018 campaign Sept. 1 against Oregon State.

Borland played in all 14 games last fall as a redshirt freshman and stepped in as the starting middle linebacker while Chris Worley recovered from a foot injury.



JOSH WINSLOW

ON THE SIDELINES – Sophomore Tuf Borland (32) was slated to start at linebacker for OSU, but he'll have to work his way back into the lineup after he recovers from an Achilles injury, which is set to keep him out until September.

ry. Borland, who Meyer said March 26 will be a starter this year if healthy, was fourth on the squad in 2017 with 58 tackles, including 3½ tackles for loss and one sack.

"Tuf Borland, it just breaks your heart because he's one of the best kids I've been

around in my life," Meyer said. "A very good player. He'll be back."

The coach said that junior Justin Hilliard and sophomore Baron Browning are playing middle linebacker during spring ball while Borland is out.

Meyer said Hilliard, who has previously torn both biceps in his OSU career, is beginning to make progress this spring.

"I can't ask for anything more from him," Meyer said. "He's one of my favorite guys because he just goes as hard as he can. He's a guy that's made some mistakes on defense when he's in there, and he's just fighting through. The light is coming on, and he's doing pretty good."

As for Browning, Meyer said the 6-4, 238-pound native of Fort Worth, Texas, is "as talented a linebacker as has ever walked through these doors. He's a big freak that can do it all, a great young man."

LBs Standing Out In Spring Ball

Fortunately for the team's sake, given that Borland is sidelined, Meyer said linebacker is one position group that has made strides this spring.

With Borland out of the rotation, Meyer said the team has moved some linebackers around in practice, and the coach said he likes what he has seen, particularly during the club's recent intra-squad scrimmage.

"We actually moved Malik Harrison to Will for a little bit to try that out, Keandre (Jones) at Sam," Meyer said April 2. "That's one of our better units as far as getting better. Baron Browning graded a champion for (March 30's) scrimmage. Hilliard was honorable mention, and Pete Werner graded champion. So they're getting better. They are really talented guys."

During his press conference the prior week, Meyer also commended early enrollee linebacker Dallas Gant for his development this spring. Gant was a four-star linebacker out of Toledo St. John's Jesuit who Meyer believes will see the field this fall.

"He's probably going to play," Meyer said. "He's shown enough, and I'm going to go to him to get ready to compete on special teams, because he's one of those very mature players to come right in. He's not where he needs to be, but he doesn't have to be. He just needs to give us everything he's got and he's been doing that. He's a very smart player too."

Recruiting analyst Bill Greene told BSB he was not shocked to hear those comments from Meyer because Gant showed similar capabilities in high school, especially with the cognitive side of the game.

"It didn't surprise me," Greene said. "I saw Dallas play as a high school freshman and he was just special at the time. Watching how he progressed, each year he got better. The thing about him is he is so intelligent. When you get to this level, everyone's a stud. In high school, the big-time recruit really sticks out because he's more talented than anybody on the field. Every time he takes the field, everyone knows he's the most talented kid."

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Changes To BSB Quickly

Those of you who have logged into the electronic BSB Quickly lately have noticed changes to our site. Things may look different, but for now things function pretty much the same. While the slots are in different places, you still log in the same way, with the same user name and password, and the editions of BSB Quickly, electronic versions of Buckeye Sports Bulletin and any additional newsletters are all there.

These cosmetic changes are all part of an ultimate remake of BSB Quickly, where we will be shifting from dated issues of the electronic newsletter to a 24/7 operation better able to fully service our readers. Additional features such as message boards and video will be coming soon.

To help our readers transition to this new service we have added electronic newsletters on Fridays, updating the latest in Ohio State sports news. The next Friday newsletter will be posted on April 6 and there will be a full BSB Quickly posted on Tuesday, April 10.

BSB Quickly and its newsletters are free to all current Buckeye Sports Bulletin print subscribers.

Current subscribers wishing to access the additional electronic issues must email their name, address, phone number and preferred email address to subscriptions@BuckeyeSports.com. We will send back simple instructions on how to access the additional electronic issues as well as the electronic version of the print BSB on Mondays during football season and Tuesdays the rest of the year.

Please note that subscriptions@BuckeyeSports.com is an email address, not a website. After you send BSB your information, we will send you instructions on how to access the website.

Those subscribers who elect to enjoy the electronic version of BSB as well as the additional electronic issues will continue to receive the print copies of BSB in their mailboxes at the usual time.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call us at (614) 486-2202.

"When you come to Ohio State, those days are over. Everybody's a thoroughbred. But Dallas is so smart. He works hard. The fact that he came in early gives him such an advantage.

"With these guys getting there, coming in early is the best thing for freshmen that want to get on the field as a true freshman. He's been through strength and conditioning already, going through spring football. Whereas the guy who doesn't come in early, you get very limited opportunities to make an impression. When you put the pads on in August, they are already game planning for week one. So you get about five or six practices to make an impression. If you don't, then we'll push you to the scout team and we'll see you when we get to you.

"It's natural that (Gant) would be on the field next year. It's no surprise to me at all. He checks off all the boxes that you would want."

Pace, Vrabel To Speak At OSU Coaches Clinic

Ohio State announced on March 27 that former Buckeye offensive tackle Orlando Pace and former defensive lineman Mike Vrabel will be among the selection of guests

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who speak at the 87th Ohio State football coaches clinic, set for April 12-14 on campus.

In addition to Pace and Vrabel, other speakers will include seven coaches currently on Ohio State's staff – offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Ryan Day, co-defensive coordinator and safeties coach Alex Grinch, defensive line coach Larry Johnson, Meyer, associate head coach and defensive coordinator Greg Schiano, wide receivers coach Zach Smith and offensive line coach Greg Studrawa. Boston College head coach Steve Addazio, Findlay University head coach Rob Keys and Mount Union head

coach Vince Kehres are expected to speak as well.

Pace, an NFL and College Football Hall of Famer, played at Ohio State from 1994-96. As a Buckeye, he was a two-time winner of the Lombardi Award, an Outland Trophy winner, a two-time consensus All-American, a two-time Big Ten Offensive Lineman of the Year, the Chicago Tribune's Silver Football award winner as the best player in the conference and the No. 1 overall draft pick in the 1996 NFL draft to the St. Louis Rams. Pace, who won a Super Bowl with St. Louis following the 1999 regular season, will receive one of the coaching clinic's "Ohio's Finest" awards for his achievements on the college gridiron.

Vrabel played at Ohio State from 1993-96, during which time he was twice Big Ten Defensive Lineman of the Year and two-time consensus All-American. He then enjoyed a 14-season NFL career with Pittsburgh, New England and Kansas City that included Super Bowl wins with New England in 2001, 2003 and 2004.

Following his NFL career, Vrabel began coaching and was Ohio State's linebackers

coach in 2011 before being the defensive line coach from 2012-13. He spent the next four seasons as an assistant on the Houston Texans' staff and is now in his first year as the head coach of the Tennessee Titans.

Vrabel, who will receive the "Ohio's Finest" award for an NFL performer, is one of three former Ohio State players to be named a head coach of an NFL team, joining Sid Gillman and Dick LeBeau.

McMillan Returns To The Practice Field

Raekwon McMillan, who played at Ohio State from 2014-16, was drafted by the Miami Dolphins in the second round of the 2017 NFL draft and was named the team's starting middle linebacker heading into the preseason last fall. He suffered a torn ACL while covering a punt during Miami's first exhibition contest, however, and missed the rest of the year.

In January, Miami general manager Chris Grier gave a positive update on McMillan's road to recovery.

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Continued From Page 5

"He's right on, or ahead of schedule," he told the Palm Beach Post. "That's from the coaching staff, the trainers. He's in the meetings all the time. Just talking about how he is and how his approach has been, he should be out there and ready to go in May, out there doing everything and 100 percent."

McMillan was at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center on March 22 to watch Ohio State's Pro Day. On March 28, a video surfaced on Twitter showing the former Buckeye working out on a football field.

During his time at OSU, McMillan racked up 275 tackles, including 18 tackles for loss and six sacks, and returned his lone interception for a touchdown. The Hinesville, Ga., native also was named first-team All-Big Ten and was a member of the 2014 OSU squad that won the national championship.

1st African-American OSU Football Captain Passes Away

Leo Brown, the first African-American captain in Ohio State football history, passed away at his home in Lakewood, Colo., the university announced on March 21. He was 84.

A native of Portsmouth, Ohio, Brown played end on both the offensive and defensive lines for Ohio State from 1955-57. The three-year letterman was a member of the 1955 Big Ten championship team, the 1956 squad that set a Big Ten record with 17 consecutive conference victories and the 1957 national championship team, the third national title for Ohio State and the second under head coach Woody Hayes.

Brown earned first-team All-Big Ten honors as a junior in 1956 before being selected as a team captain as a senior in 1957, along with Galen Cisco.

OSU Sets Winter Academic All-Big Ten Record

A total of 109 Ohio State student-athletes earned winter academic All-Big Ten honors this year, surpassing the previous high of 93 set in 2016-17. Minnesota was second with 95. Michigan and Penn State are tied for third 77.

The winter all-conference list includes men's and women's basketball, men's and women's gymnastics, men's ice hockey, swimming and diving and wrestling. Student-athletes must be part of a varsity team for a winter sport and be enrolled full time while carrying a grade-point average of 3.0 or high in order to be eligible.

Included among the honorees are men's basketball players Joey Lane, Micah Potter and Jae'Sean Tate, with the latter earning the distinction as a graduate student. Seven women's basketball players were honored as well, including Kelsey Mitchell, the program's all-time leading scorer. From the wrestling team, three-time national champion Kyle Snyder was among 13 to earn academic All-Big Ten distinction.

Wrestlers Joey McKenna and Nathan Tomasello, swimmer J. Reed McGraw, basketball forward Stephanie Mavunga and swimmer Cheyenne Meek all maintained perfect 4.0 GPAs. The five student-athletes tied the Buckeyes with Michigan State for the most students holding perfect GPAs in the conference.

What follows is a complete list of Ohio State's winter academic All-Big Ten honorees and their majors.

Men's Basketball – Joey Lane, Jr., marketing; Micah Potter, So., business; Jae'Sean Tate, Grad., sport industry.

Women's Basketball – Karlie Cronin, Jr., sport industry; Asia Doss, Sr., civil engineering; Linnae Harper, Grad., sport coaching; Savitha Jayaraman, So., operations management; Stephanie Mavunga, Grad., sports management; Kelsey Mitchell, Sr., sport industry; Makayla Waterman, Sr., psychology.

Men's Gymnastics – Evan Bluemel, Sr., landscape architecture; Joey Bonanno, Jr., health sciences; Andrew Brower, Fr., animal sciences; Michael Chan, So., accounting; Robert Costea, So., history; Seth Delbridge, Sr., computer science and engineering; Sam DeWitt, Jr., environmental policy and decision making; Josh Hurwitz, Jr., food, agriculture and biological engineering; Sean Melton, Sr., hospitality management; Joey Smith, So., food agriculture and biological engineering; Coleson Stodghill, So., mathematics; David Szarvas, Jr., biology; Meyer Williams, Sr., finance; Alex Wilson, Sr., civil engineering.

Women's Gymnastics – Nevin Adamski, So., biology; Olivia Aepli, So., business marketing; Kaitlyn Hoffland, Sr., psychology; Amanda Huang, Jr., business finance; Janelle McClelland, Jr., speech and hearing science; Stefanie Merkle, Sr., sport industry; Jamie Stone, Jr., psychology.

Men's Ice Hockey – Wyatt Ege, Jr., family resource man-

agement; Freddy Gerard, Jr., strategic communication; Ronnie Hein, So., exploration; Dakota Joshua, Jr., sport industry; Brendon Kearney, Jr., finance; Tanner Laczynski, So., sport industry; Christian Lampasso, Sr., industrial systems engineering; Sasha Larocque, Jr., earth sciences; Kevin Miller, Sr., finance; Gordi Myer, So., exploration; Tommy Parran, Jr., English; Sean Romeo, Sr., finance/accounting; Luke Stork, Sr., sport industry; Matthew Weis, Sr., sport industry; John Wiitala, Jr., finance.

Men's Swimming & Diving – Jack Barone, Sr., marketing; Mark Belanger, Sr., health promotion, nutrition and exercise science; Mossimo Chavez, Jr., sport industry; Nathan Christian, Sr., exercise science; Quinlan Deval, So., computer science and engineering; Alex Dillman, So., psychology; Justin Dunn, Jr., accounting; Brandon Fonczak, Jr., actuarial science; Daniel Gloude, So., biology; Justin Hopkins, So., chemical engineering; Clark Jackman, Sr., logistical management; Oliver Knabb, Jr., sport industry; Calvin Koethke, So., biology; Noah Lense, So., chemical engineering; Andrew Lindstrom, Sr., physics; Andrew Loy, So., pre business administration; Michael Lynch, computer science and engineering; William Matz, So., engineering physics; J. Reed McGraw, Jr., biomedical engineering; Greg Nymberg, Sr., finance; Brayden Seal, Sr., biochemistry; Brad Shannon, Jr., international studies; Sam Stankivicz, Jr., chemical engineering; Thomas Trace, Sr., neuroscience; Ryan Vander Meulen, So., marketing; Clay White, Sr., biology; Noah Worobetz, Jr., exercise science.

Women's Swimming & Diving – Katie Antal, Sr., communications; Elizabeth Auckley, Sr., chemistry; Meg Bailey, Sr., physical education; Rebekah Bradley, So., biochemistry; Kathleen Cook, Sr., animal sciences; Maria Coy, Jr., mathematics; Kathrin Demler, So., psychology; Quinn Fike, So., molecular genetics; Emma Fish, So., food, science and technology; Lucija Jurkovic, So., physical education; Marianne Kahmann, So., science and technology; Molly Kowal, So., accounting; Lauren Kurzydlo, So., business; Devin Landstra, So., business; Rebecca Luft, So., neuroscience; Macie McNichols, Sr., health promotion, nutrition and exercise science; Amanda McNulty, Sr., marketing; Cheyenne Meek, Grad., public administration; Mikayla Murphy, Jr., marketing; Lara Tarvit, So., human resources; Kerrigan Vargo, Jr., psychology; Hannah Whiteley, So., middle childhood education; Katie Wright, So., health promotion.

Wrestling – Cody Burcher, Sr., sport industry; Troy Caldwell, Jr., sport industry; Brendan Fitzgerald, So., marketing; Ke-Shawn Hayes, Jr., finance; Bo Jordan, Sr., sport industry; Micah Jordan, Sr., sport industry; Joey McKenna, Jr., operations management; Luke Pletcher, So., sport industry; Clay Ragon, So., sport industry; Fritz Schierl, So., business; Kevin Snyder, So., business; Kyle Snyder, Sr., sport industry; Nathan Tomasello, Sr., kinesiology.

– **Tim Moody**

After his Ohio State career, Brown enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, where he worked as a surgeon for more than 20 years before retiring as a colonel.

Jones Named Honorary Sheriff's Deputy

The Port Clinton (Ohio) News Herald

recently reported that former Ohio State quarterback Cardale Jones was sworn in last summer by Sheriff Steve Levorchick as an honorary sheriff's deputy for Ottawa County, located near Toledo. Jones was honored by the sheriff's office on March 23 at a father-son banquet in Elliston, Ohio.

"Cardale will be helping us to make sure

we have the bond with our young people," Levorchick said. "They don't want to hear from a 55-year-old sheriff, but they'll listen to Cardale."

The News Herald noted that Jones will be fitted for an official Ottawa County Sheriff's Office uniform.

"When he shows up in a sheriff's office uniform instead of a football uniform, they're going to realize cops aren't necessarily all bad," Levorchick said. "What a great ambassador to have for the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office."

Jones played in 23 games during his Ohio State career that spanned from 2013-15, completing 166 of 269 passes for 2,322 yards with 15 touchdowns and seven interceptions. He is best known for his three-game stretch when he led OSU to wins over Wisconsin in the Big Ten Championship Game, Alabama in the Sugar Bowl and Oregon in the College Football Playoff National Championship.

A native of Cleveland, Jones was selected by Buffalo in the fourth round of the 2016 NFL draft. After one year with the Bills, he was traded to the Los Angeles Chargers prior to the 2017 season. He has appeared in just one game as a pro, completing 6 of 11 passes for 96 yards with no touchdowns and one pick in Buffalo's 30-10 loss to the New York Jets on Jan. 1, 2017.

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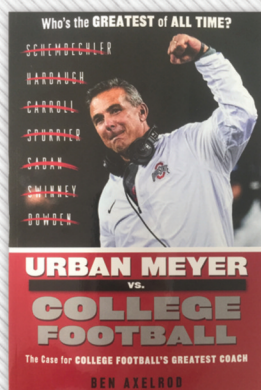
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QB Battle Could Extend Beyond Spring Practice

Continued From Page 1

of things. He has a lot of versatility that way, which is good.

"Dwayne is a good enough runner to get himself out of trouble, and a gifted passer.

"Those are their skill sets, but who can move the team down the field, who can be a leader and the guys rally around? Those types of things are really what we're focused on right now."

As of April 2, head coach Urban Meyer said nobody had separated himself in the competition just yet. He noted that Burrow was the best player in one scrimmage, but Haskins quickly caught up not long after that. Martell, he said, had a great practice to open the month of April as well.

For now, it's unclear whether Meyer will be able to name a starter by the end of spring, but he certainly knows what he's looking for.

"Just lead the team, and there's got to be a separation at some point, and right now there is not that separation," Meyer said. "Just when one starts going, the other one comes up, and the other one drops a little bit. And I'm talking about (all) three."

Joe "John" Burrow

Class/Elig.: Sr./Jr.

Height/Weight: 6-3/215

Hometown: The Plains, Ohio

High School: Athens

Career Notes: Redshirted as a freshman

in 2015 before serving as Barrett's backup the following season. Battled with Haskins for the No. 2 job last spring and fall but lost out when he broke a bone in his throwing hand just before the season started.

Career Stats: 11 games played; 29 of 39 (.744) for 287 yards passing; two touchdowns, no interceptions; 15 rush attempts for 53 yards; one rushing touchdown.

Going into spring practice, most outside the program expected Haskins to be the front-runner, and there's good reason for that. He was Barrett's deputy last year, and he proved himself in crunch time against the Wolverines.

At the end of the day, though, Haskins might never have been the No. 2 had Burrow stayed healthy in fall camp. At the time, Burrow was the incumbent backup, and he has plenty of talent – if not the cannon arm of Haskins.

Even if those outside the program felt Haskins had a leg up this spring, though, Burrow is confident he's getting a real crack at the job.

"It's a mixture of how I'm treated and how the reps are going," Burrow said. "The reps are going really well and really fair so far."

Out of the three quarterbacks competing, Burrow might have the most on the line. He's the oldest, meaning he can't lose the job and wait for one of the other two to leave either as seniors or early for the NFL. If he doesn't win the job this year, it

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Instructions:

Number your picks 1-10 (feel free to write in any players we left off the list) and mail this ballot to Buckeye Sports Bulletin, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, OH 43212. Lists can also be emailed to bsb@buckeyesports.com. Please provide your name, age and any additional comments regarding your ballot. Copies of the ballot are accepted and voters are welcome to attach additional paper if more space for comments is needed.

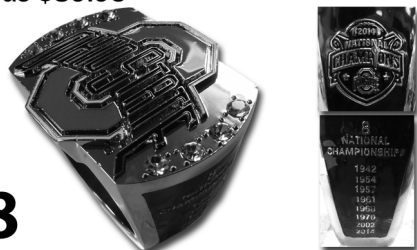
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would be a safe assumption that Burrow will never be the starter at Ohio State, barring injury.

That said, he has plenty of options. Since Burrow is on track to graduate this spring, he could transfer to another school and play right away with two years of eligibility remaining.

Burrow has acknowledged the possibility of transferring in the past, but he's also grown annoyed with questions about it – as yet, nothing is guaranteed.

"I get all these tweets, 'Where are you going? You're going to transfer. You never play.' I see them," he said. "I don't say anything, but I see them."

When Day was asked about Burrow's potential departure, he referred back to last fall when the Athens product was firmly in the mix to be Barrett's backup. Now, he's firmly in the mix once again.

"Joe, if you really followed him from last preseason, he had a great preseason," Day said. "He really was coming on towards the end, but then he broke his hand. So that really hurt him in terms of his development early on last season, and then we got into the rhythm of the season."

"Now his hand is better so now he's worked in the offseason to get stronger, and now he's going to go after this thing."

Dwayne "Ross" Haskins

Class/Elig.: Jr./So.

Height/Weight: 6-3/218

Hometown: Potomac, Md.

High School: Bullis School

Career Notes: Redshirted in 2016 before winning the No. 2 job last season, most notably replacing Barrett in the comeback win over Michigan.

Career Stats: eight games played; 40



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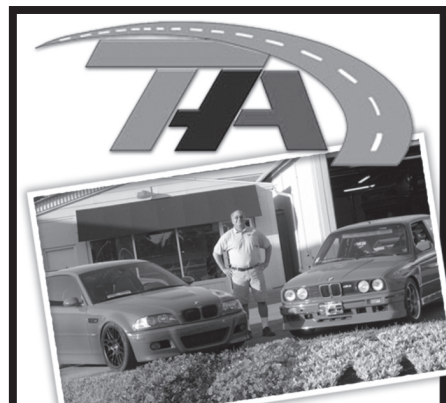
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of 57 (.702) for 565 yards passing; four touchdowns, one interception; 24 rush attempts for 86 yards.

As mentioned, those outside the program have long had Haskins as the leader. Going into spring camp, he took the approach that it was his job to lose as well.

"I hold myself to a high standard, and in my opinion, that's what I think," he said. "If I lose the job, it's because of me. So I'm just going to keep working hard, pushing myself, pushing my teammates and studying the film and my playbook and prove every day that I'm the guy."

Of the three options, Haskins is the only one with meaningful game action under his belt – as in he's played in a collegiate game that was still on the line.

Against the Wolverines last year, Haskins entered in the second half with the Buckeyes trailing, 20-14. He promptly led Ohio State on a scoring drive that include a key third-and-13 pass to Austin Mack and a 22-yard scramble to set up J.K. Dobbins' 1-yard touchdown. The Buckeyes scored 10 more points with Haskins at the helm as he completed 6 of 7 passes for 94 yards.

Reflecting on that performance – which was his final appearance of the season – Haskins said his confidence was boosted after leading the Buckeyes in The Game.

"Just having the opportunity to play in the biggest rivalry in all of sports and just being able to go in there and not really worry, just play one play at a time," Haskins said of his experience. "Being able to go out and win puts a lot of confidence in you just because your team saw you do it, the world saw you do it and it just gives you a lot of confidence going forward."

Haskins will be hoping that performance gives him the inside track to win the starting job, but Day has tried to keep expectations steady, noting that he's trying to look at all three quarterbacks on a clean slate this spring.

"He did a nice job in that game, but this is a new year and these guys have got to come out and compete," Day said. "Just like anything else, what have you done for me lately? So he's got to improve and prove himself to be the starter just like the other guys."

Tate "Chuck" Martell

Class/Elig.: So./Fr.

Height/Weight: 5-11/207

Hometown: Las Vegas

High School: Bishop Gorman

Career Notes: Joined Ohio State as an early enrollee last year before redshirting. Was undefeated as a starter in high school.

Martell is probably the betting underdog in the quarterback battle this spring. He's the youngest of the three and has yet to appear in a collegiate game.

Really, though, Martell having a legitimate shot in the race is a testament to both his ability and the confidence the coaching staff has in him as a player.

"I mean, I think I have a legitimate chance because if you're the best player you should play," Martell said. "If not, that's not up to me, but they have to play

the best player if they want to win a national championship. We'll see who it is. (The coaches) have to make that decision."

Early in spring camp, Meyer was sure to note that Martell is in the running, and the quarterback himself has felt that since then.

"We all get pretty much even reps," Martell said. "I mean, I don't notice any difference in reps."

Day, when asked whether Martell really had a chance, admitted he understood why there would be a question. He also stressed that anyone would be in the race if he proved to be the best option.

"It's not just a two-person race," Day said. "Whoever is out there moving the team down the field is going to play."

While Burrow and Haskins have more experience at the collegiate level and have the more prototypical frames for a quarterback, Martell brings a different run-

ning ability to the table. He's the fastest and shiftest of the three, and Meyer has even noted there are some similarities to Barrett, who was an accomplished runner for the Buckeyes.

That skill set means Martell brings different factors into play when he's on the field, and he says he's been told that there will be packages to showcase that talent even if he doesn't win the job. That could mean Martell will replace the quarterback at times, or it could mean he'll get on the field in different spots on occasion – the details are not yet ironed out.

Meyer was asked about playing multiple quarterbacks at the same time and stressed that it's easier said than done – you can't simply throw a guy out there at wide receiver just to get two quarterbacks on the field. Martell isn't just any quarterback, though.

"The one thing is Tate's got an incredible skill set," Meyer said. "There is some conversation about that, because he is a gifted guy."



Ryan Day

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Fuller Ready To Lead Ohio State Safeties In 2018

By RYAN McGLADE
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In his first two years at Ohio State, Jordan Fuller had the luxury of relying on Malik Hooker, Erick Smith and Damon Webb for guidance. With those three now gone, though, Fuller must lead the Buckeye safeties in 2018.

Fuller, a native of Old Tappan, N.J., appeared in 12 games during his freshman campaign of 2016. That year, he had the opportunity to play behind Hooker, who ranked third nationally with seven interceptions and first with three interceptions returned for touchdowns while

on his way to being named a unanimous first-team All-American. That remarkable season led to Hooker being selected 15th overall by the Indianapolis Colts in the 2017 NFL draft.

Last year, Fuller played alongside Webb, who was a senior and certainly a leader of the safeties as the group's only returning starter from 2016. Starting his junior and senior seasons (27 consecutive games), Webb served as a mentor to Fuller. The veteran defensive back led the team last year with five interceptions, including a pick-six against USC in the Cotton Bowl, where he was named the defensive Most Valuable Player.

While Webb was making his contribu-

tions last fall, Fuller was flourishing as well. Fuller was second on the team with 70 tackles, two fewer than linebacker Jerome Baker. He also had three tackles for loss and two interceptions in his first year as a starter.

With all of the attention now set squarely on the 2018 season, Fuller becomes this year's Webb as Ohio State's lone returning starting safety. Speaking to reporters after the team's spring practice on March 22, Fuller said he began taking ownership of his new role this winter.

"Having Damon and Erick Smith gone, I'm the only one with real experience," he said. "So people look to me

for guidance and somebody to talk to and somebody to lead the way."

Joining Fuller as safeties who are returning this year are sophomores Isaiah Pryor, Brendon White and Jahsen Wint. Sophomore Amir Riep is back as well, but he spent his freshman season playing cornerback before switching to safety this offseason. Additionally, Wayne Davis, who redshirted as a freshman in 2016, is competing for playing time. There also will be two incoming freshmen – Marcus Hooker, Malik's younger brother, and Josh



Jordan Fuller

Proctor – joining the fold this summer.

Other than Fuller, Pryor has the most reps at safety under his belt. The Lawrenceville, Ga., native played in 12 games last fall and recorded 13 tackles. Wint appeared in nine contests, logging four stops, while White, who also spent time at wide receiver last year, had one tackle in five outings. Riep saw action in all 14 games, collecting 10 tackles and one interception. But he earned that time at corner and on special teams.

Despite the limited experience, Fuller indicated he is not alone when it comes to governing the back end of OSU's defense.

"It's not just me," he said. "There are guys that have been here like Jahsen, Wayne, Isaiah, Brendon, Amir – we all take on the challenge together. It's not just me."

Pryor said he has noticed Fuller's transformation into a more prominent leader since the end of last season. Not only has Fuller taken command of the safety room, Pryor said, but he urges his teammates to perform well academically.

"He's being more vocal now and trying to get out more on and off the field with making sure we're on top of our stuff – class-wise too," Pryor said of Fuller.

Fuller noted that the largest change in his approach to becoming a leader of the safeties this year is psychological. After pacing the defensive backfield in tackles last season, Fuller (6-2, 204) has no qualms about his physical capabilities. It is now just a matter of him believing in himself.

"I think confidence is the biggest thing," he said. "I felt good physically last year but just having that mental confidence that you've got it. That's really the main thing."

And while Fuller has dedicated plenty of time concentrating on the cognitive side of the game, he said he also has used winter workouts and spring ball to polish his craft.

Asked where he has improved the most since 2017, Fuller responded, "I would definitely say playing man to man. This offseason, we really focused on it in playing catch. That's what I've gotten better at. And just developing as a leader."

Man-to-man coverage, of course, is a staple of Ohio State's defense. The Buckeyes utilize that scheme far more often than they employ zone, which leads them to recruit high-end athletes for the defensive backfield. Fuller, who was a four-star recruit and ranked among the top 150 prospects coming out of high school, said he realizes how critical it is for him to perform well while playing man-to-man defense. He also said he is ready for the challenge.

"It's something you've got to do in this defense," he said. "If we can't play aggressive and play man to man, then we can't be as dynamic as a defense. I take that responsibility on my shoulders and do the best I can to make that happen."

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OSU FOOTBALL

Alex Grinch, who was hired in January as OSU's co-defensive coordinator and safeties coach, concurred that it is essential safeties can predominantly play man to make the defense as a whole more versatile. He also pointed out that, because the strong safety in college football has essentially become obsolete, it is vital that the last line of defense believes it can stand its ground in pass coverage while also providing support to stop the run.

"We want coverage skill across the board," Grinch said. "You need, at safety, more in college football. I think the trickle-up effect in the National Football League is to build your confidence. That has to be No. 1 on the job description for a safety vs. a spread offense, but obviously you've got to have the physical tools to hold up in the run game. It's becoming more and more of a unique position."

Grinch was Washington State's defensive coordinator and secondary coach the past three years. He turned a Cougar defense that was ranked 99th nationally (442.3 yards allowed per game) prior to his arrival into a unit ranked 16th nationally last season (323.3 yards allowed per game).

And just in the few months Grinch has been in Columbus, Fuller said he has learned a great deal from the fiery 37-year-old.

"He brings a lot of energy," Fuller said of Grinch. "He's a knowledgeable guy. I don't know what the staff meetings are like, but I know he definitely brings a lot to those. To our safety room, he brings a lot of knowledge about techniques and covering receivers and stuff like that. I'm really happy we've got him."

Though Grinch has been added to the staff, Fuller said he has not sensed a dramatic shift in the defense's style. If anything, Fuller said Grinch has implored the safeties to continue the standard that has already been set.

"It's just being aggressive and doing your job," Fuller said. "That's what we preached last year, and that's what we preach this year. Not too much has changed, but guys are stepping into new roles and that's what we're getting figured out right now. I'm excited."

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Grinch Brings Aggressive Edge To Secondary

By GARRETT STEPIEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

As Alex Grinch climbed up the coaching ladder, the past 15 years of hard work paid off when the journey ultimately led him back home to Ohio State.

The Grove City, Ohio, native officially became a Buckeye when it was announced on Jan. 8 by the university that he had joined head coach Urban Meyer's staff.

Since then, the former defensive coordinator at Washington State (2015-17) has assumed his new duties as OSU's co-defensive coordinator and safeties coach, and Grinch hit the ground running, primarily focusing on developing the talented crop of athletes at his disposal in the secondary.

"It gives you some tools in the toolbox, without question," Grinch said, "as long as you're sound and putting them in the right position to be successful."

With the departures of Damon Webb (5-11, 195) after 27 straight starts as a two-year starter and Erick Smith (6-0, 223) following a career-best season in the defensive-back rotation, Ohio State is looking to Grinch to help remold a reloaded secondary.

The passion in his hands-on approach with the defensive backfield, a position group he has overseen since he got into coaching after his playing career at Division-III Mount Union (1998-01), has already been felt by the Buckeyes on the back end of the unit.

The list of athletes includes junior safety Jordan Fuller, who broke out in 2017 with 70 tackles, three tackles for loss and two interceptions in his first season as a starter.

"He's a young guy with a lot of energy and really knowledgeable," Fuller said of Grinch. "I love to pick his brain about all types of different techniques and how to play certain techniques. I'm really loving it."

The 6-2, 204-pound Fuller is one player in particular Grinch wants to see take his game to the next level. Weeks removed from Grinch's introductory press conference on Feb. 28 when he mentioned his vision for Fuller to become an elite defensive back in the Big Ten and all of college football, Grinch has continued to challenge Fuller even further over the course of camp.



Alex Grinch

While Fuller is entrenched as a starter, Isaiah Pryor has put together a strong spring showing to emerge as Webb's most likely replacement. The 6-2, 197-pound Pryor played in 12 games last season as a freshman and hopes to earn a starting role under Grinch.

"He's very discrete in what he wants, very clear," Pryor said. "So all we're trying to do is just follow his directions to the best of our ability, and he brings a lot to the table."

While OSU finished 30th in the country in passing yards allowed with an average of 195.9 over 14 games, the Grinch-led unit at Washington State ranked ninth in the nation with 170.9 in 13 contests and yielded only 11 touchdowns through the air.

Grinch's philosophy of having athletic defenders with coverage ability has manifested itself at safety this spring with the position switch by sophomore Amir Riep (5-11, 195), who played cornerback last year, and the development of sophomore Brendon White (6-2, 210), who split time between safety and wide receiver last year. With those players in the mix, as well as third-year sophomore Jahsen Wint (5-10, 196), Grinch has achieved his goal of creating competition this spring.

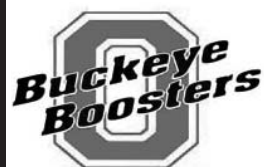
"All those guys, we'd like to shuffle in

there," Grinch said. "It's OK to have, day one, Isaiah getting a lot of reps and runs with the ones. He's got to make sure he takes advantage of those reps. If you want to stay there, you have to perform at a certain level. It's a privilege to be a one. You earn that."

"We're rotating other guys through. Jahsen, for one, is a young player in the program who has some physical tools and some speed and has a chance to compete there – Amir Riep, Brendon White as well. So all those guys are competing to get into the depth chart and ultimately get on the field."

As spring camp progresses, those spots should fill themselves out. Until then, an energetic Grinch will continue promoting competition in his position group and making sure the players can hold up in all facets of the game.

"At both (safety) spots, you've got to be able to hold up in coverage against a tight end," Grinch said. "It might be a matchup from a physical standpoint that you might be (deficient) in, but you've got to be able to make sure you've got the speed and agility and coverage skills to cover a slot receiver that might be to have the quick skill set – as well for size. If they have two backs in the backfield and a tight end, you better come up and support the run. It's a heck of a job description just to come in that way as football becomes more of a spread-out game."



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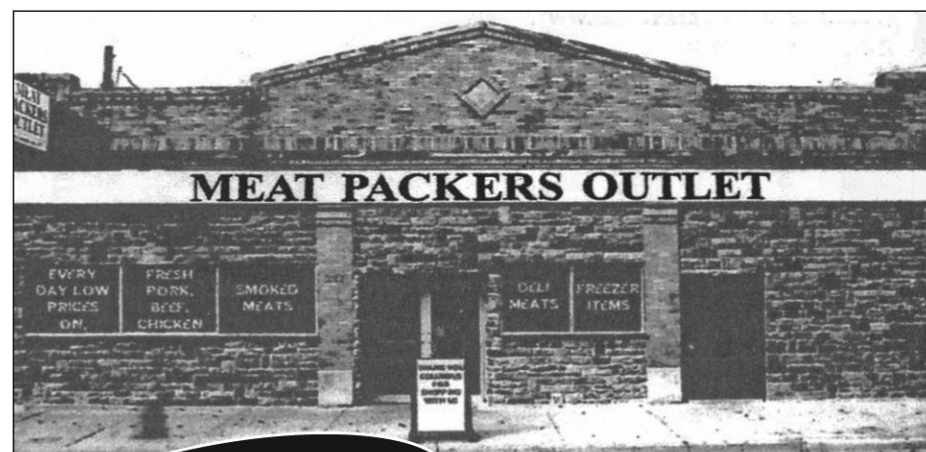


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OSU OL Adapting Without Jordan This Spring

By GARRETT STEPIEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Midway through Ohio State's spring football camp on March 28, Michael Jordan had yet to step foot between the sidelines of the practice field at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

Away from the action for the Buckeyes' first seven practices, Jordan craves the day when he can crouch back down in his three-point stance at left guard, grip the turf firmly with his hand and lead the offensive line into the 2018 season. But for now, the junior's primary focus is on getting back to 100 percent.

After another strong season as an anchor on the left side of the trenches, Jordan goes from soft-spoken sophomore to upperclassman leader for OSU. With 27 straight starts, he brings invaluable experience to a position group that graduated multiyear starters Billy Price and Jamarco Jones.

"It's a lot different," Jordan said. "I'm not used to not having my big brothers there. It is a lot different, but we still have the same culture going on. We're trying to build on where they left off."

The 6-7, 310-pound Jordan is a critical piece to the Ohio State offensive next season. Throughout the spring, though, his impact on the field is limited, and he'll stay on the sidelines with a shoulder injury until training camp begins in August.

After the Buckeyes completed their 2017 campaign Dec. 29 against Southern California in the Cotton Bowl, Jordan underwent what he

described as minor surgery on a torn labrum in his shoulder.

"I'm doing a lot better, actually," Jordan said. "I'm starting to get a lot of my range of motion, starting to do a little bit of weights. Just trying to get my strength back. No contact. Just conditioning, running and working weights."

He spent six weeks in a sling through the middle of February, followed by spring practices spent on the side with strength and conditioning coach Mickey Marotti. When camp began, head coach Urban Meyer confirmed Jordan would be out for the spring. Still, Jordan refuses to let his limitations sideline him entirely from further offseason improvement.

Under the physical guidance of Marotti during practice and in the weight room throughout his rehabilitation process, followed by mental preparation from offensive line coach Greg Studrawa in the meeting room, Jordan attacked spring just as hard as if he were healthy.

Does he see his time away from the field as a break from the grind? Some might, but Jordan said he's striving to make the most of it and simply tries to control what he can.

"It depends on what type of football player you want to be," Jordan said. "The grind doesn't ever stop. Even though I'm injured, I'm always trying to find small things I can do to get myself better. If you just want to be average, then I guess it does stop for some people."

Even with Jordan out, life has to go on for the other members of the OSU offensive line. While the Buckeyes are looking forward to Jordan's eventual return, his injury opens up opportunities for younger players and veteran

reserves to showcase their versatility across multiple positions and get in some work with the first-team offense.

When Branden Bowen (6-7, 312) went down Oct. 7 with a broken leg and Ohio State needed someone to step up as the starter at right guard, Demetrius Knox (6-4, 312) got the call, holding down the spot for the rest of the season. Knox knows from experience the importance of cross-training positions after he emerged for the Buckeyes down the stretch.

"It helps a lot because everybody has a chance," Knox said. "Mike started for two seasons. This is about to be his third. We already have that chemistry with him. We know what he's going to do. We know how he knows his job. He's going to be where he's supposed to be."

"Now it's the people behind him. We (the upperclassmen) have to make sure they know what they're doing."

While the open competition at center between fifth-year senior Brady Taylor (6-5, 302), junior Matthew Burrell (6-3, 306) and red-shirt freshman Josh Myers (6-5, 308) remains ongoing, Studrawa's cross-training teachings

keep each of the three as viable options at guard as well. Beyond them, younger linemen such as former Brooklyn (N.Y.) Erasmus four-star recruit and early-enrollee Matthew Jones (6-4, 305) are also learning the ropes of the interior positions.

With at least two new starters set to join the offensive line and a few players learning multiple positions, Jordan plans to lead by example when he returns to action for fall camp. In the meantime, his fellow blindside anchor, Isaiah Prince, is shouldering the on-field load and setting the tone in spring practice.

"After that year (starting at right tackle and struggling as a sophomore in 2016), my focus was to just play as hard as I can and to get better – just to have really great focus and focus on what I need to do to get better and play as hard as I can," the 6-7, 310-pound Prince said. "Also, I apply that to the younger dudes in my room now, which is just showing them what that example looks like and just going hard and just being a leader for them – somebody they can look up to."

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OSU To Host Official Visitors For Spring Game

High school football prospects are now allowed to take official visits in the spring, and at least five from the 2019 class are scheduled to do so for Ohio State's spring game on April 14.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Ryan McGlade

The five official visitors expected to be on hand for the exhibition are Houston St. Pius X four-star wide receiver Jalen Curry; Buford, Ga., four-star center Harry Miller; Huntington (W.Va.) Spring Valley four-star offensive tackle Doug Nester, who was Ohio State's first pledge of the 2019 haul; Austin (Texas) Lake Travis four-star wide receiver Garrett Wilson; and Avon (Conn.) Old Farms four-star athlete Marquis Wilson.

Curry (6-3, 195) received a scholarship offer from Ohio State on Feb. 6, a day prior to National Signing Day for the 2018 cycle. Curry, the No. 92 overall prospect and 18th-best wide receiver in the 247Sports composite, has yet to see Ohio State's campus but knows plenty about the program.

"They produce a lot of talent for the (NFL)," Curry told 247Sports of Ohio State. "I'm being

recruited by (head coach) Urban Meyer and (receivers coach) Zach Smith."

Curry holds more than 30 offers, some of which include Auburn, Florida State, Michigan, Oklahoma and Texas A&M. He is high school teammates with four-star quarterback Grant Gunnell, who also has an OSU offer and visited the Buckeyes unofficially March 8.

"We would love to go to the same college," Curry said. "But at the end of the day, we have to pick the school that is best for each of us."

Miller (6-4, 310) garnered an offer from Ohio State last June and has taken at least two unofficial visits to OSU since then, the most recent being in January. Regarded as the No. 63 player regardless of position and second-best center, Miller also has obtained offers from Clemson, Georgia, Michigan, Notre Dame, Stanford and others.

Should Miller commit to Ohio State, he would join Nester and Mentor, Ohio, three-star offensive tackle Ryan Jacoby as offensive line pledges in the Buckeyes' 2019 haul.

Nester (6-5½, 295) issued his verbal to the Scarlet and Gray on Aug. 5. The No. 56 prospect in America and eighth-best offensive tackle has taken four unofficial visits to Ohio's capital since, with the most recent trip coming the weekend of March 7.

Garrett Wilson (6-0, 185) collected an offer from the Buckeyes in December. His only trip to Ohio State to this point occurred the weekend of March 23 in an unofficial capacity.

On March 31, Wilson tweeted that he

would take an official visit to Texas the week after his OSU visit and announce his commitment shortly after. The No. 46 overall prospect and No. 6 wideout was high school teammates with 2018 Ohio State quarterback signee Matthew Baldwin as the duo led Lake Travis to the state championship game last season. Wilson has long been familiar with Ohio State, though, because he lived in nearby Dublin when he was younger.

Marquis Wilson (6-0, 175) is listed as the No. 283 overall prospect and No. 24 athlete in the 247Sports composite but primarily plays cornerback for his high school squad.

He secured an offer from Ohio State on Jan. 27 and will be making his first trip to Columbus during that second full weekend of April. He is then planning to take an official visit to Penn State the following weekend for the Nittany Lions' spring exhibition.

Wilson told 247Sports there are two questions in particular he hopes to have answered when he goes to see the two Big Ten powers.

"The way I'm developing my decision, one thing is where have great defensive backs been developed recently?" Wilson (6-0, 175) said. "And how soon can I make an impact on a team? I feel like Penn State has done a good job of developing (defensive backs) the last few years, and the same with Ohio State. They've all been going to the (NFL) combine and killing it from a physical standpoint. Both of those universities do a good job."

In addition to Ohio State and Penn State, Wilson is considering taking his remaining official visits to a combination of three of the following schools: Alabama, Florida, Iowa, LSU, Michigan, Nebraska, Syracuse and Tennessee.

A complete update on Wilson's recruitment can be found in the March 27 electronic issue of BSB Quickly. For signup information for BSB's 36 additional electronic issues, free to all print subscribers, see page 5.

Meyer Sees Limited Depth At QB In 2019 Class

When BSB went to press on April 2, Ohio State was still waiting to secure a commitment from a quarterback in the 2019 class.

A year ago at this time, Franklin (Ga.) Heard County signal caller Emory Jones had

already been a member of OSU's 2018 class for eight months. Jones, of course, ultimately decommitted and signed with Florida on Dec. 20 of last year, the first day of the early signing period. Meyer, however, replaced Jones by garnering a signed letter of intent from Baldwin, who enrolled in January.

As for this upcoming cycle, Meyer and his staff have roughly 10 months to land a quarterback commitment before National Signing Day hits and slightly less than that until the early signing period. They have certainly been at work, offering at least 11 QBs while hosting plenty more on unofficial visits.

Meyer said March 26 that not having a quarterback committed to the 2019 class is not by design. He pointed to the lack of premier talent in this year's batch of prospects as a major reason for the delay. There are currently no five-star QBs in the 247Sports composite rankings.

"We're not on purpose taking it slower," Meyer said. "There's not a lot of depth at quarterback this year in the recruiting world. So other than that we're just working as hard as we can to get them here. We've had a bunch visit, so now we have to find the right marriage between them and us."

4-Star CB Includes OSU Among Final Choices

Ohio State remains a top option for Norfolk (Va.) Maury four-star cornerback Sheridan Jones. The 2019 prospect mentioned via Twitter on March 24 that OSU is among the seven schools he is considering moving forward. Joining Ohio State on the list are Alabama, Clemson, Nebraska, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia Tech.

Jones (6-0, 170) was offered by the Buckeyes in August and took an unofficial to Ohio State the weekend of March 30, less than a week after releasing his top seven. The No. 139 recruit in the nation and No. 17 cornerback told 247Sports the trip to Columbus left a lasting impression with him.

"It was great," Jones said. "(What impressed me most) had to be the practice. It was live from beginning to end. I loved every moment of it."

"The visit definitely caught my attention.

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ASK AN ANALYST

With Scout.com's Bill Greene

Avon, Ind., four-star running back Sampson James committed to Ohio State out of the blue on March 19 after his unofficial visit. How surprised were you by his addition and what does it mean for the Buckeyes in the class of 2019?

"I knew they were in good shape with him, but I thought his recruitment would go a lot longer. It's an early commitment for such a highly rated kid. He had offers from everyone, and I thought he might play the game a little bit – see who else offered and build relationships. But that visit must have blown him away. Someone had told me he really is a homebody and was definitely going to stay close to home. They kind of thought all along that it was going to be Michigan, Ohio State or Notre Dame. Nobody really thought the kid was going to go to USC or Texas."

James and Avon head coach Mark Bless both mentioned Ohio State running backs coach Tony Alford as a common factor for why he committed so soon. When you look at some of the talents the Buckeyes have brought in at the position these past few years, how critical has Alford been for OSU in recruiting?

"He's great. He's looked at nationally with a reputation for being one of the best recruiters in the country. He's very personable, very outgoing, he seems like someone

that really likes recruiting and that probably plays as big part as anything for this in these guys. I think he enjoys the process. I think he enjoys the challenge of going after the top kids – going head to head with Notre Dame, Alabama, USC, whoever and winning. Tony Alford is tremendous.

"I do (see Alford becoming a head coach in the future). I think he would be a natural. The recruiting part he would have down pat. He would have the Ohio State pedigree behind him, so he would have the name recognition. I think he'd be a natural. I could see the next round of MAC hires. I would think he'd be front and center."

At this point in the process, kids like to rapidly throw out their lists of top schools – some of which they have little to no interest in ultimately choosing. When you follow recruiting for some of these prospects as you have over the years, what do you look for in gauging where they stand with their top choices?

"The lists mean nothing to me. I don't even read them. What I look at, especially in this time of year, are the unofficial visits. There are some Ohio kids that, in the past week, have made their second unofficial visit to Boston College. That's a 10-hour car drive from Columbus. So when I see that, my antenna goes up. Going there once

shows interest. Coming back in a one-month period, driving all the way to Boston and back again, now you have my attention.

"When I see a kid from Florida coming to Ohio State, it's like, 'Oh, OK, that's an attention getter.' When the kid says, 'I'm coming back for camp,' or, 'I'm coming back for Friday Night Lights,' it's understandable of what's going on. But when a kid puts a school on a list – he's never been there and he has no plans to visit there – it's kind of like you watch what they do and not what they say. That's so true in recruiting. I'll even go back to (Tampa [Fla.] Berkeley Prep five-star offensive tackle) Nicholas Petit-Frere. His commitment to Ohio State caught everybody by surprise, but that kid made two (unofficial) visits to Ohio State before he took his official visit. So it shouldn't have been a surprise because that's a telltale sign. That's what people should look for.

"You can follow these kids on Twitter and really learn a lot, but pay attention to not so much their graphics and lists as much as where that kid is going on visits. When you see that kid visit and that kid is in the car driving 12 hours, 10 hours somewhere, then that's serious interest. In what I look at, I look at are they going on their own dime or are they riding 16 hours in a car to get somewhere and back? That shows interest, to me."

Ohio State took a step up this weekend. The facilities were really nice."

Jones added that he met with Meyer, associate head coach and defensive coordinator Greg Schiano and cornerbacks coach Taver Johnson while in Columbus.

"That went real good," Jones said of meeting with the Ohio State coaches. "They focused on telling me about how (the program) would fit me and things of that nature. Coach Johnson is a real cool dude. I was with him almost my whole visit. I love his energy."

2019 In-State CB Has Multiple Ties To OSU

Macedonia (Ohio) Nordonia cornerback Nyles Beverly may not have an Ohio State offer, but he does have more than one connection to the university. The 2019 prospect

told BSB that Johnson was in contact with him when Johnson was the defensive coordinator at Temple in 2017.

"Coach Taver Johnson, he came from

Continued On Page 16



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CB Beverly On OSU's Radar, Hoping For Offer

Continued From Page 15

Temple, and he was talking to me at Temple," Beverly (5-11, 180) said. "Even though he came to Ohio State, he still talks to me and we still keep in touch.

"He's a cool dude. When he was at Temple, he came to my school and he sounded like he really wanted me and was very interested. I'm excited to move on in the recruiting process with him."

Beverly, who is not in the 247Sports composite rankings but is listed as a three-star prospect, the No. 570 overall recruit and No. 47 corner in 247Sports' independent rankings, added that Johnson's message to him has not changed since he moved from Temple to Ohio State.

"It's been the same," Beverly said. "I talked to him for a little bit, and we still keep in touch. We'll probably move forward (in the recruiting process) when I visit and start talking a little bit more."

Beverly took his first visit to Ohio State the weekend of March 30. Prior to making the unofficial trip, he told BSB what he was hoping to get out of his stay in Columbus.

"Just get a look at how they practice, get a look at how Coach Johnson coaches, get a feel of what the coaches are like and just how they do things down there," he said.

Beverly told BSB that he grew up watching the Buckeyes as a fan, and because of that, along with another unique link to the program, he would be honored to land an offer from the Scarlet and Gray.

"It would mean a lot," he said. "Growing up as an Ohio State fan, it would really mean a lot to me because me and (former OSU cornerback) Denzel Ward used to be neighbors. I know him and go to the same high school he went to, so it would really be cool to get an offer from Ohio State."

Though there is a slight age gap between Beverly and Ward, who decided to leave Ohio

OSU Football Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2019 who have issued verbal commitments to play football at Ohio State. (Star ratings reflect 247Sports composite rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Ryan Jacoby	OT	6-5	270	★★★	Mentor, Ohio
Sampson James	RB	6-1	211	★★★★	Avon, Ind.
Doug Nester	OT	6-5½	295	★★★★	Huntington (W.Va.) Spring Valley

State after his junior season of 2017 to pursue an NFL career, Beverly said they were close growing up. Beverly pointed out that it's been more difficult to keep in touch recently, especially since Ward is preparing for the 2018 NFL draft.

"He used to live a couple doors down," Beverly said of Ward. "His senior year (of high school) was when I was in eighth grade, so I wasn't in high school when he was, but I've talked to him a bunch.

"Since he's blown up, we haven't really talk-

ed. I only talked to him when he was first there (at Ohio State). We didn't really talk about football stuff. I'd loved to talk to him soon just to see what advice he has for me."

Beverly mentioned that he hopes to eventually be a player the caliber of Ward when he transitions to the college game.

"I definitely put him as a goal of someone I want to reach and be as good as him or even better," he said.

While Ohio State has yet to offer Beverly, Michigan was the first Power 5 program to do so in early March. Since then, Beverly has acquired offers from Kentucky, Pittsburgh, Purdue and Vanderbilt, to name a few. He visited the Wolverines the weekend of March 10.

Beverly said he'll use the Michigan visit to his benefit as he progresses through his recruitment.

"Michigan has a bunch of amazing things there, so now I have something to really compare the schools to because Michigan is a high standard," he said. "Now I know going into other visits what to compare it to."

Though Michigan has offered Beverly before Ohio State, the recruit said the Buckeyes have been well aware of him for a while now.

"My (high school) head coach went to one of the clinics at Ohio State, and he told me that some coaches have heard about me and they're very interested," Beverly said. "I forget which ones specifically, but my coach said they were interested and they knew of me at Ohio State before the Michigan offer."

Recruiting analyst Bill Greene told BSB that Beverly is only beginning to permeate recruiting circles and that there's a possibility he could end up following Ward's footsteps to Ohio State.

"He's just kind of hitting the radar right now," Greene said of Beverly. "When he got that Michigan offer, it kind of opened some peoples' eyes. He's got good speed. He can play safety or corner. I like him as a safety better, although I think people tend to see him as a corner. We'll see how his body grows. He's a really good player. Just solid, super solid. I'm not quite sure he would be Ohio State material, but he might be. I think they'll probably want to see him in camp and develop that relationship with him before they offer. He's someone they're considering. He's in the picture for sure."

Beverly said he would like to end the recruiting process this summer.

"I want to make my decision in June or July so I can focus on my senior season," he said.

2019 TE Takes Unofficial To Ohio State

A three-star tight end out of Chandler, Ariz., Brayden Liebrock took an unofficial visit to Ohio State on March 23, seven weeks after he hauled in an offer from Meyer's program. That marked the first trip to Columbus for Liebrock (6-5, 220), the No. 399 overall prospect and No. 13 tight end in the 2019 cycle.

"I like Ohio State and I really look forward to meeting the coaching staff," Liebrock told 247Sports prior to the visit. "I want to get a feel for the players, the people around there and see the stadium. I talk mostly to (offensive



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A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

30 Years Ago – 1988

A two-year starter at offensive guard for Massillon (Ohio) Washington, John Schilling was garnering plenty of attention from colleges. After all, the 6-4, 260-pounder earned first-team All-Northeastern Ohio and Stark County honors, along with All-Ohio special mention in 1987.

He scheduled four recruiting visits – Boston College, Ohio State, Michigan and N.C. State. After visiting the Buckeye campus and speaking with two former Massillon Washington products, though, Schilling said there was no need to continue.

"I talked to Chris Spielman and Wes Siegenthaler, and they gave me stuff straight out," Schilling said. "I tried to keep an open mind throughout the recruiting, but I always liked Ohio State. Ohio State has the football tradition."

25 Years Ago – 1993

Shawn Springs was being pulled in all different directions during his recruitment. The son of former Ohio State running back Ron Springs, Shawn, a tailback out of Silver Spring (Md.) Springbrook, certainly had ties to OSU.

The younger Springs (6-0, 180), however, said he had told Michigan head coach Gary Moeller he wanted to be a Wolverine. To muddy the waters even more, Springs' high school head coach, John Haberman, who played football at Penn State, admitted he wanted his star prepster to go to Happy Valley.

Ultimately, Springs decided to follow in his father's footsteps. "Ohio State is a great school, Columbus is a great city, and I really like the players," he said. "In the end, I went where I was most comfortable and that turned out to be Ohio State."

20 Years Ago – 1998

Dayton Belmont tight end Willie Metcalf was planning to attend Belmont's summer camp, but his high school head

coach, Lorenzo Burke, said Metcalf (6-7, 255) was also eyeing trips to Cincinnati, Ohio State, Michigan and Michigan State over the summer.

"Ohio State has sent a letter, but I have not spoken to anyone," Burke said. "Michigan State called and they're interested. I have letters from virtually every Division I school."

"I think, though, that because Willie comes from a real close family he will probably want to stay somewhere in the Midwest to go to school."

15 Years Ago – 2003

Ohio State's recruiting class for 2004 doubled in size March 16 when Xenia, Ohio, junior offensive lineman Ben Person committed to the Buckeyes. He joined Hubbard, Ohio, defensive back Shaun Lane in the Buckeyes' next haul.

Person (6-4, 300) was offered during OSU's junior day in February. He mulled it over for a few weeks before committing to the Buckeyes as he attended OSU's Pro Day at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

"There were a lot of factors," Person said. "They started recruiting me early. I am a Buckeye fan and I've always been a Buckeye fan. I can basically play at home – it's only an hour away."

10 Years Ago – 2008

Terrelle Pryor, the No. 1 high school prospect in the nation, announced March 19 that he would play his college football at Ohio State.

The 6-6, 225-pounder from Jeannette, Pa., had postponed his decision until after National Signing Day to finish his high school basketball career and perhaps take official visits to Penn State and Oregon.

Pryor, however, said his final decision came down to archrivals Ohio State and Michigan.

"I just broke it down and got involved with a lot of the kids

(at Ohio State)," he said. "I felt comfortable with Coach (Jim) Tressel. It was my choice."

Five Years Ago – 2013

Ohio State went nearly two months without picking up a verbal commitment in its 2014 recruiting class, but head coach Urban Meyer ended the drought March 23 when he earned a pledge from Lombard (Ill.) Montini Catholic defensive end Dylan Thompson.

Thompson (6-5, 265) chose the Buckeyes over scholarship offers from such schools as Clemson, Illinois, Mississippi, Missouri, Purdue, Tennessee, USC and Vanderbilt.

Thompson made an unofficial visit to Ohio State on March 23, and he said he knew immediately the Buckeyes were the right team for him.

"I think I knew the moment I walked through the front doors of the Woody Hayes facility, but I didn't want to jump to any conclusions," Thompson said. "I knew I had a number of visits scheduled to some top-notch programs, and I wanted to be sure I was making the right decision."

One Year Ago – 2017

On the surface, it hardly matters what a recruit names his dog. But when Micah Parsons, the nation's top defensive end and second-best prospect for 2018, named his puppy Brutus, people took notice.

Parsons (6-3, 236), a product of Harrisburg, Pa., was committed to Penn State at the time he gave his puppy the same name as Ohio State's famous mascot.

According to the player, there was nothing significant about the coincidence.

"I looked up dog names (online)," Parsons said. "The Twitter reaction went crazy. Didn't expect everyone to go crazy over a dog."

coordinator and quarterbacks coach Ryan Day and (offensive coordinator and tight ends coach Kevin) Wilson."

In addition to Ohio State, Liebrock has an offer list that features such schools as Alabama, Arizona, Arizona State, California, Nebraska, Notre Dame and USC. He has yet

to take any official visits and did not have any scheduled by the time BSB went to press.

Pennsylvania LB Visits Ohio State

On the same day Liebrock was in town, 2019 Malvern (Pa.) Prep three-star outside

linebacker Keith Maguire made it to Columbus for the first time as well.

Checking in as the No. 427 player in the country and No. 28 prospect at his position, Maguire (6-2, 215) reeled in an Ohio State offer on Feb. 7, National Signing Day for the 2018 batch of recruits.

Like Liebrock, Maguire hasn't taken any officials to date and has yet to schedule any. Outside of Ohio State, Maguire has received formal invitations to play football at programs such as Alabama, Clemson, Michigan, Nebraska and Notre Dame.

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4-Star RB Commit Brings BIG Build To OSU

By GARRETT STEPIEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When Mark Bless watched a raw freshman running back debut on varsity late in the 2015 season, the head football coach at Avon High in Indiana knew he had a special talent.

As a two-sport athlete, Sampson James initially preferred basketball to football. Then two plays completely changed the course of his career.

"Basketball was, at that time, kind of his passion – his first love – and then (James) dressed varsity in a few games as a freshman in the state (football) tournament," Bless told BSB. "In one of the games toward the end, he got in and busted off a 70-yard run which got called back, but on the very next play we gave him the ball again and he ripped off a 40-yard gain. You could just see the excitement in his eyes when he came off the field."

From there, James was hooked on football.

"Going into high school, I wasn't going to play football," James told BSB. "I was going to try to stick to basketball. I had hoop dreams. So I was going to try to make my athletic career out of basketball rather than football."

Over the next two years, his ability on the field continued to blossom. After a pivotal sophomore season in which he took his game up a notch with seven scores and 589 yards on 138 carries in 11 games, colleges took notice.

Toward the end of his breakout junior campaign in 2017 – a year in which he near-

ly tripled some of those numbers with 20 touchdowns and 1,782 yards on 243 touches in 13 games – Ohio State saw enough to extend an offer in November.

Fast-forwarding beyond his junior season, James trekked 196 miles from Avon to Columbus on March 18 for an unofficial visit. Before the trip even ended, he became a Buckeye.

"He spent the next day (March 19) texting and informing other coaches, thanking them for recruiting him throughout this process and a nice note to them that he's 100 percent in with Ohio State," Bless said. "It was exciting. (The decision) kind of surprised me a little bit just because I know he was looking forward to taking his official visits, but now he only has to worry about taking his one official visit."

The 6-1, 211-pound James went into the weekend with the intent to learn more about OSU. He left blown away by what the combination of the program and university had to offer, making him sold on committing in the moment.

"I just felt like my relationship, with both head coach Urban Meyer and running backs coach Tony Alford, was very strong," James said. "I talked to a lot of current and former players that were around on the visit. It's just a great situation there. I just really fell in love with everything about the place."

"I have been talking about (committing) with them for a long time. I've been thinking about it, and I had been thinking about the visit for a long time. So I was real eager to get down there and real excited to get down there."

Get To Know: Sampson James

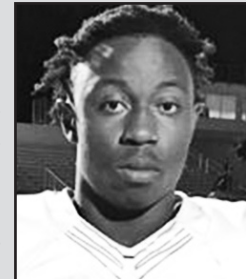
High School – Avon, Ind.

Position – RB

Height, Weight – 6-1, 211 pounds

Rankings – James is rated a four-star prospect and the No. 141 overall player, No. 8 running back and No. 2 player in Indiana for 2019, according to the 247Sports composite.

Player Evaluation – "Well-built back who is an excellent downhill, north-south runner. Has a good burst and is tough to stop when he gets a head of steam. He breaks a lot of arm tackles and seems to rarely give defenders a straight shot on him, so he is usually running through arm tackles. When he has needed to, he has shown some elusiveness and stop-start ability, although his forte in college is not likely to be making a ton of people miss. He uses his size and strength to be very effective as a pass blocker, and he should only improve there." – Allen Trieu



On and off the field, James immediately saw what type of all-around opportunities Ohio State had to offer.

"I think that he was really impressed with all the phases of the football program," Bless said, "with some of the phases of the program that were presented, the Real Life Wednesdays program and just the number of things Ohio State does for the football program, the football players to help them be better student-athletes and reach their potential for after football."

Rated in the 247Sports composite as the No. 141 overall prospect, No. 8 running back and No. 2 player in Indiana, James gives Ohio State its third commitment in the class of 2019. After the Buckeyes got on the board with a pair of four-star offensive tackles in Doug Nester (6-5½, 295) from Huntington (W.Va.) Spring Valley and Ryan Jacoby (6-5, 270) from Mentor, Ohio, James packs a punch out of the backfield.

"James' style should help him be very effective in Ohio State's scheme," said 247Sports recruiting analyst Allen Trieu. "He runs similarly to how Mike Weber ran in high

school, but James is an even bigger back. His pass protection is impressive at this early stage, and that is usually something that holds young backs back from seeing the field.

"When he gets on campus, J.K. Dobbins will be a junior, and the Buckeyes will have some good backs in the class in front of him as well, but based on his size and level of development at this point, he has some of the prerequisites we look for in a kid who can compete early."

On track to have his diploma by the end of the fall, James plans to sign early and enroll at OSU next spring. By then, Weber will likely be gone for the NFL after completing his fourth season in Columbus, leaving an opening for James to immediately work his way into the mix.

"(James) looks forward to trying to get there next January, to graduate early and get on campus for the spring term," Bless said. "In speaking with his guidance counselors, he'll need to pick up an English class over the summer and he'll be on his way."

In the weight room and on the track throughout the rest of the spring and summer, James is on a nonstop grind to get his body where it needs to be before he reaches the next level.

"I want to be as fast as possible," James said. "To be honest, that's why I'm running track – trying to get faster. But definitely, I want to get stronger as well, improve my numbers in the weight room when I get there and I just want to be a smarter football player overall."

When he does arrive at Ohio State, James will be in good hands. Meyer's résumé speaks for itself, while Alford molded a pair of 1,000-yard rushers as freshmen in Weber (2016) and Dobbins (2017).

"Coach Meyer's well-respected across the country as a football coach," Bless said. "As a matter of fact, a lot of people would want the opportunity I got – to have my guy play for him."

"Probably the thing that impressed me the most with Coach Alford was the first time he came in at Avon and recruited Sampson. He did a great job of communicating with him and talking, first of all, real life more so than football."

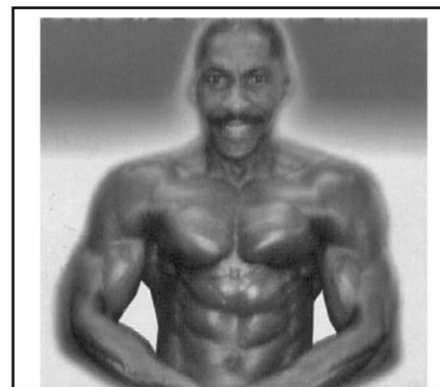
"From that day forward, I think there was just a strong connect in relationship. I think Sampson just has a lot of confidence in Coach Alford as a coach, but also, he can connect and continue to develop the relationship."

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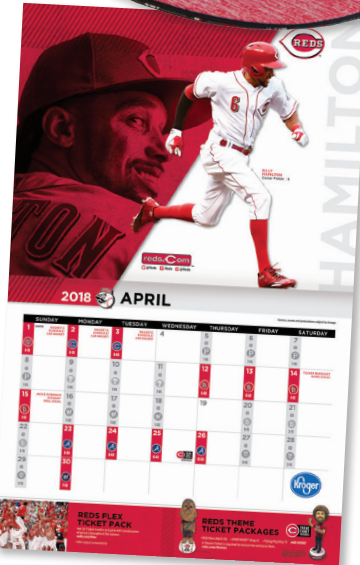
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Experts Classify 2017-18 Run As A Huge Success

By RYAN McGLADE
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The 2017-18 campaign for the Ohio State men's basketball team was a surprise to many outside of the program as well as some within it.

Chris Holtmann replaced Thad Matta as head coach in June and had to replenish a depleted roster before the season began in November. In those five months leading up to the season, the former Butler head coach also inked a 2018 recruiting class, his first at Ohio State, that features three-star forward Justin Ahrens from Versailles, Ohio; four-star forward Jaedon LeDee from the Kinkaid School in Houston; four-star guard Luther Muhammad from Jersey City (N.J.) Hudson Catholic; and three-star guard Duane Washington out of Chatsworth (Calif.) Sierra Canyon.

Holtmann, who led Butler to the NCAA Tournament in each of his three seasons as the head coach of the Bulldogs, took over an Ohio State program that went 17-15 in 2016-17 and guided it to a 25-9 record this past season, including a 15-3 mark in the Big Ten that was good for second place. The Buckeyes started conference play 9-0 this past season and enjoyed wins over then-No. 1 Michigan State at home on Jan. 7 and at then-No. 3 Purdue on Feb. 7. The regular season was capped off with Holtmann being named the Big Ten Coach of the Year and Keita Bates-Diop, who has announced he will be turning pro, being named the Big Ten Player of the Year.

Though Ohio State was eliminated by Penn State in the quarterfinals of the Big Ten tournament, OSU's third loss to the Nittany Lions in 2017-18, Holtmann's club earned the fifth seed in the West Region of the NCAA Tournament. The Buckeyes opened March Madness with an 81-73 win over 12th-seeded South Dakota State in Boise, Idaho, on March 15. Two days later, they fell behind fourth-seeded Gonzaga, 15-0, in the opening minutes before taking a 67-62 lead with about six minutes left, only to come up short, 90-84.

With the 2017-18 season now in the books, BSB spoke with former basketball Buckeye Terence Dials, who was named the 2006 Big Ten Player of the Year as a fifth-year senior; Paul Keels, who just completed his 20th season as the play-by-play voice on OSU's flagship radio network; cleveland.com Ohio State men's basketball beat writer Bill Landis; sports director of Columbus radio stations 610 WTVN and 105.7 The Zone Matt McCoy, who also was the public address announcer for Ohio State men's basketball home games for 21 years; and 247Sports recruiting analyst Brian Snow to discuss what the Buckeyes achieved on the hardwood this past winter.

Terence Dials

BSB: How would you rate this past season?

Dials: "All things considered, out of a ranking of one through 10, I'd probably make it a nine. Considering where we came from and the previous season that we had, I don't think anyone outside of the locker room would have expected this type of turnout for this season."

BSB: Do you think the Buckeyes losing in the second round of the NCAA Tournament lessens what they accomplished?

Dials: "I don't think so. At the end of the day, especially in the NCAA Tournament, there's only going to be one team smiling at the end, right? I think the season overall was a success, and you can't look at just literally one event that happened – losing in the NCAA Tournament. As a player, throughout that game, it was a big disappointment. But when you have time to reflect on the season and where you came from, I think you can look at yourself and teammates and feel good about the season."

BSB: Did you see this kind of season coming for Ohio State?

Dials: "Being a former basketball player at Ohio State, I try my best all the time to be optimistic about the program. At the same time, I'm a realist. Obviously, I know when we have a program worth mentioning all the time, and, especially after the last couple of years, I didn't think this program was at a place where it needed to be. Me personally, I can't speak for everyone, I didn't think they would have a season like this. When you look at who they had coming in and what they had returning, it was basically the same team. I don't think anyone could account for Keita having the year that he had, and that had a lot to do with it."

BSB: Where do you think a season like this past one can put Ohio State in the big picture of college basketball?

Dials: "I was a part of coaching change as well, from Jim O'Brien to Thad Matta. We had a similar year previous to Thad Matta getting there. When you have players with good character who buy into the system and play for the name that's on the front of the jersey as opposed to the name that's on the back, you get the product that you saw this past year."

"My team in particular, when I played, Thad Matta's first year, we had a lot of selfless guys, and we just gave it up for each other. It put the program back on the map nationally, and it catapulted them to a level where – obviously, getting a recruiting class like Greg Oden and Mike Conley and those guys can put anyone in the country on the map – but I don't think that would have happened if we

wouldn't have played so well in those two years with Coach Matta being at the helm.

"I think only good things are coming. We've already got a couple good recruits that I've seen, and I think it's only going to get brighter. Chris Holtmann is a great coach, a great recruiter, a great communicator. It's only going to get better."

BSB: What do you think are realistic expectations for next season?

Dials: "I'll have to see how the roster shakes up. With Keita leaving and Jae'Sean Tate gone and Kam Williams, you've got to kind of see who takes charge and who's that leader out there on the court. I'm kind of reserved on giving a prediction, especially when we're still kind of in basketball season right now. We've kind of got to wait a little bit and kind of just see how the new guys get acclimated. I think the preseason will show you what type of team we have."

Paul Keels

BSB: How would you rate this past season?

Keels: "I think it was an incredible success. I'm not sure that many folks would have thought this team would have been in the NCAA Tournament and would have been competing for a Big Ten title or that they would be a team that would have ended up having two wins over top-five teams. I think it was an incredibly successful season. Yes, given what they did, there probably was the thought of wanting more. Still, I think it was incredibly successful."

BSB: Do you think the Buckeyes losing in the second round of the NCAA Tournament lessens what they accomplished?

Keels: "I don't think so. That was an awfully good team they lost to. (Ohio State) really had their chances through the course of the game, even though they fell behind so big early. It's disappointing when it happened, but I think as you get further removed from it and you look at what this team did and all of the things that went into it, I don't think that really took away from it."

BSB: Did you see this kind of season coming for Ohio State?

Keels: "No, not at all. I certainly thought that it was a team that could be a competitive team. You knew that Keita, if he had lived up to what the previous coaching staff had talked about in the previous summer, that would help them a lot. You didn't know what Andrew Dakich was going to give them. That was a big bonus. I don't think anybody really saw it coming."

BSB: Where do you think a season like this past one can put Ohio State in the big picture of college basketball?

Keels: "I think what it can do is, first off, help their image in regard to getting the kind of recruits to keep them playing at this level or even higher. I think it certainly gives those players who were in the tournament for the first time a taste of what it's like and that desire to want to be there. I think this season also created so much chemistry. That was very obvious being around the team in our capacity and seeing how they reacted in practices and games as they traveled. Those were some of the big things that you take away from it."

BSB: What do you think are realistic expectations for next season?

Keels: "That's a tough one to think about right now, given how much they're losing with Keita and Jae'Sean and Kam Williams and the things that Andrew Dakich gave this team. Obviously, the four freshmen that signed early, there's going to have to be some significant contributions from them. I think a lot is going to fall on a guy like C.J. Jackson, who made such incredible strides from his first year to his second year. So, it's kind of hard to say right now, just that there's going to have to be major contributions from the new people."

Bill Landis

BSB: How would you rate this past season?

Landis: "About as good as you could've imagined, I suppose. I picked them to finish 11th. I think overall, they were picked to finish 11th, and they finished second. We know the wins they had – Michigan State, Purdue. The Big Ten tournament doesn't sour it at all for me. I thought getting to the NCAA Tournament and winning a game was kind of a nice way to end it. I guess the thing that's kind of interesting is how the bracket sort of opened up after they lost. I think maybe there was a chance for them to go on some kind of run. But I'd give them an A or a 98 out of 100, whatever rating system you're using. Just about as high as you can go."

BSB: Do you think the Buckeyes losing in the second round of the NCAA Tournament lessens what they accomplished?

Landis: "No. I actually thought they showed a lot in that game because I thought they had no chance at all against Gonzaga, and they probably should have won. I thought getting there and winning a game was good. No matter what would have happened, I don't think it would have soured the season because the tournament is so random. To use the tournament as some sort of ultimatum on how good your season was I think is a little silly sometimes, and certainly silly for Ohio State."

BSB: Did you see this kind of season coming for Ohio State?

Landis: "No, not at all. The thing in my head was, 'Well, if Keita is good, then maybe they can be a team in the top half of the Big Ten and an NIT team – maybe sneak into the (NCAA) tournament.' But he was much better than I thought he would be. And then C.J. Jackson was much better than I thought he would be, too. I guess Dan Dakich saw it, but anyone else who said they saw that coming is crazy."

BSB: Where do you think a season like this past one can put Ohio State in the big picture of college basketball?

Landis: "It helps. Chris Holtmann inherited a good initial team, but he did not inherit a program in a great state, I don't think. I think (the staff) showed they can coach, and they showed they can develop players. And I think that's going to work in their favor. So, I think maybe it will speed up the process of rebuilding Ohio State, which I think will bear itself out in the 2019 recruiting class and classes after that. I think beyond making this season a fun and interesting one, they set themselves up really well for the future because Chris Holtmann and his staff showed they can coach and develop guys, and that's what players want to play for."

BSB: What do you think are realistic expectations for next season?

Landis: "It's hard to say because you don't know who they're going to bring in yet in terms of graduate transfers. Chris Holtmann



Chris Holtmann

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has a very good track record of getting the most out of his teams, so I'll say top half of the league again. I feel pretty confident in that. I'll say NCAA Tournament but not as high of a seed as they were this past season. I think somewhere five to seven in the Big Ten, and if they're in the upper half of that, they can get into the NCAA Tournament."

Matt McCoy

BSB: How would you rate this past season?

McCoy: "I thought it was an excellent season. When you consider where they were when they made the decision to move on from Coach Matta to when Coach Holtmann took over, the roster was slim to say the least. The expectations at that time, if you can go back to June, I remember thinking, 'Maybe they could, at the top end, maybe be an NIT team or sneak into the NCAA Tournament if they had a real surprise.' But I never expected them to start 9-0 in the Big Ten and be a top-25 team for most of the year. You have to term it nothing short of just a tremendous year."

BSB: Do you think the Buckeyes losing in the second round of the NCAA Tournament lessens what they accomplished?

McCoy: "For me, no. I will say this, though: because of how they played and the great surprise that they were, they kind of redefined expectations as the year went. After they beat Purdue and then beat Illinois and they were alone in first in the Big Ten, I remember at the time thinking, 'Gosh, I hope they win the Big Ten regular-season championship.' Because they were so overachieving that I thought that would just be great for this team if they could hang on and do it."

"They didn't, because they lost those two

games that week (at Penn State on Feb. 15 and at Michigan on Feb. 18), and I was more disappointed for them than in them if that makes any sense. They achieved so much, but they had an opportunity at that point to win a Big Ten championship. I just wish they could have – because they had such a great year – had some kind of banner that they could have raised for it."

BSB: Did you see this kind of season coming for Ohio State?

McCoy: "Not really. I remember this, the very first game of the year, Robert Morris, I went to that game (as a fan), and I saw Keita play. I was thinking, 'Is it just because it's Robert Morris, or did I not remember how disruptive and how good Keita can be because of his length?' I was watching that game and going, 'Man, he's really good. Do I not remember him being this good? Or is just because it's Robert Morris?' As you started to realize how good he was, you started thinking that maybe something was possible. I never thought that they would have the start that they had. I mentioned them losing games down the stretch, but they were a top-25 team almost the entire year. I did not see that coming at all."

BSB: Where do you think a season like this past one can put Ohio State in the big picture of college basketball?

McCoy: "What I hope it has done for Chris Holtmann is reenergize the recruiting base. Let's face it, they're losing a lot this year. I don't want to put any limitations on Chris Holtmann based on the job he just did, but when you lose Keita Bates-Diop and Jae'Sean Tate, and Kam Williams was really starting to play well, and even Andrew Dakich as that glue guy that he turned out to be, that's a lot."

"Are they going to next year just not have a hiccup? I would be surprised if they didn't,

if they didn't take a little bit of a step back. But maybe we don't know what these freshmen are like and everything. What I hope this year has done is allow recruits to look and say, 'You know what, he's got something good going there,' and allow him to tap into some talent that maybe a year ago with the way things were going would have maybe not been interested. Nobody loves Coach Matta more than me, but it seemed like for whatever reason, through no fault of his own, negative recruiting, whatever, that the program had lost momentum recruiting-wise. I hope what Chris Holtmann accomplished this year has returned the momentum and some of these top players start looking at Ohio State and saying, 'Yeah, that's a place we need to go.'"

BSB: What do you think are realistic expectations for next season?

McCoy: "They lost so much, but after what we just experienced this year, I wouldn't put any limit on it. I think NCAA Tournament again is an expectation. Maybe that's high end, I don't know. Put it this way, a year from now I wouldn't be surprised if we're talking about another, 'Wow, what a great, surprising year,' because this guy can coach and they lost a lot. We have to see what these new kids are like and who he ends up getting recruiting-wise to help fill the roster. I feel like with him, his past and what we've seen from him, an expectation is NCAA Tournament every year and then along those great years, Big Ten championships and those kinds of things. I think you could expect this team to be looking at another NCAA Tournament bid again next year."

Brian Snow

BSB: How would you rate this past season?

Snow: "All things considered, it went as well as it possibly could. Let's be honest, that is not an ultratalented roster, and they managed to finish in the top three in the Big Ten and win an NCAA Tournament game. That is exceeding all expectations, and it exceeded realistically even your wildest dreams expectations for people at this time last year."

BSB: Do you think the Buckeyes losing in the second round of the NCAA Tournament lessens what they accomplished?

Snow: "No, because I don't think they lost early in the NCAA Tournament. They lost a round later than they should have lost. I wouldn't call a second-round exit an early loss for them."

BSB: Did you see this kind of season coming for Ohio State?

Snow: "No, not even a little bit."

BSB: Where do you think a season like this past one can put Ohio State in the big picture of college basketball?

Snow: "To me, one isolated season means nothing one way or the other. You can have a good year or a bad year and it really has no indication for what you do next. You look at Northwestern, they did their thing two years ago (qualifying for the NCAA Tournament for the first time in school history), and this year they were terrible. It's just kind of what it is."

BSB: What do you think are realistic expectations for next season?

Snow: "Well, they lose their two best players (Bates-Diop and Tate). So, that's typically less than ideal. I would say the hope would be an NCAA Tournament, but it's going to be a long climb to get there unless they can add some talented graduate transfers or things of that nature."



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OSU's Johnson Leading Charge For '19 PG Beverly

By RYAN McGLADE
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Harlond Beverly has been on Ohio State's radar for a while, and for good reason. The 2019 four-star prospect out of Southfield (Mich.) Christian School is the No. 61 overall recruit and sixth-best point guard in the 247Sports composite.

What's more, Beverly (6-4, 167) led his high school team to a state championship this past season. Playing at Michigan State's Breslin Center, Beverly finished with a team-high 23 points on 8-of-18 shooting in Southfield Christian School's 64-54 win over Buckley on March 24.

The third-best player in the state of Michigan did more than just put the ball in the hoop, though.

"He was a huge factor," Southfield Christian School head coach Josh Baker told BSB of Beverly. "In the state championship game, I think he had the first 11 (points), and then at one point he had 17 and (Buckley) had 14. He had eight steals and six blocks in the state championship game, so he was great for us. He's a talented kid."

Ohio State was aware of Beverly's talent before his junior season began in early December. The Buckeyes hosted Beverly on an unofficial visit the weekend

of Nov. 11, which also was when they extended a scholarship offer to him.

Fresh off his seventh season as Southfield Christian School's head coach, Baker said OSU assistant coach Terry Johnson has been the one recruiting Beverly. Baker added that he first met the Buckeye staffer when Johnson was an assistant at Butler (2007-17). Johnson's final three years at Butler were spent working under Chris Holtmann, who became Ohio State's head coach last June.

Though Johnson has been in Columbus for less than a year, Baker said Beverly already has a rapport with Johnson and the Scarlet and Gray.

"I know he's really liked them," Baker said of Beverly.

"I've known Coach Johnson for a long time. We both have twins, and I've known him since he was at Butler looking at some of our guys. I really like him, and I know that (Beverly) was very impressed when he came down and visited. That really seems to be fairly early in the process."

Brian Snow, a basketball recruiting analyst for 247Sports, told BSB that Johnson excels in connecting with high school student-athletes.

"He's very good at building relationships," Snow said. "He's an organized guy, and he relates well to kids."

Because of the lack of experienced guards currently on Ohio State's roster, Holtmann has said on multiple occasions that he and his staff are prioritizing that position in the upcoming recruiting classes. The Buckeyes have two guards signed to their 2018 haul – four-star Luther Muhammad from Jersey City (N.J.) Hudson Catholic and three-star Duane Washington out of Chatsworth (Calif.) Sierra Canyon – but are looking to add more in the 2019 class.

Baker said OSU has been transparent with Beverly, who was named Michigan's 2018 AP Class D Player of the Year on April 2, about its need for guards in the 2019 cycle.

"They've just made it very clear to Harlond," Baker said, "saying, 'Look, we're recruiting multiple guards and the best we can get. We need a couple of them.' They just want to make it clear that that's who they're going after and he's one that they still want."

In addition to Ohio State, Beverly holds offers from Baylor, Michigan State, Missouri, Northwestern and Xavier, among others. MSU head coach Tom Izzo was in attendance to watch Beverly's big performance in that state title game, which also included seven rebounds and four assists. Chris Mack recently left his post as Xavier's head coach to fill the vacancy at Louisville, but Xavier promoted former associate

head coach Travis Steele to replace Mack, so Beverly still has familiarity with the Musketeers.

Regardless of which school Beverly ultimately signs with, Baker said the prepster's options do not lack in pedigree when it comes to the basketball coaches.

"Obviously, (Johnson is) a great guy, and Ohio State is a great school and a great program," Baker said. "Harlond is in a great position. The schools that are looking at him, they're great schools and they're great coaches. You don't get to be coaches at those kinds of universities if you don't know basketball and love kids and impact kids and get the most out of them. He's got great choices."

Baker noted that Beverly routinely communicates with a number of those courting him.

"He'll have conversations with coaches several times a week that are kind of big-time coaches and big-name people," Baker said.

In Snow's mind, the Buckeyes' chances of landing Beverly are just as good as any other suitor's.

"They're certainly one of many in the mix," Snow said. "Xavier is in the mix. Baylor's in there. Michigan State for sure. Ohio State for sure. Ohio State is one of several who are right there and are involved and could get (an official) visit from him when the time comes. I would say Ohio State legitimately has a chance in that one."



Harlond Beverly



Terry Johnson

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Bates-Diop Says He Will Cherish OSU Career

When Keita Bates-Diop sat down inside the postgame interview room at the Schottenstein Center on March 26, he realized that would be his final time sitting at that table as a player on the Ohio State men's basketball team.

COURT REPORT Ryan McGlade

Shortly after taking his seat, Bates-Diop announced he was declaring for the 2018 NBA draft and was planning to hire an agent, which he had yet to do by the time BSB went to press.

A product of Normal (Ill.) University High, Bates-Diop was a member of Ohio State's 2014 recruiting class. He came off the bench in 33 games as a freshman in 2014-15, averaging 3.8 points and 2.1 rebounds in 9.9 minutes. He then started 33 contests the following season as a sophomore, producing 11.8 points and 6.4 rebounds in 31.5 minutes per game. The 6-7, 235-pounder appeared in only nine games during his third year on campus in 2016-17 before having season-ending surgery for a stress fracture in his left shin and subsequently being granted a medical redshirt.

Bates-Diop saved his best season as a Buckeye for last. Just one year removed from having the aforementioned operation, Bates-Diop averaged 19.8 points and 8.7

rebounds while recording 12 double-doubles this past season and was named the 2018 Big Ten Player of the Year. He also led OSU to a 25-9 overall record, including a 15-3 mark in the Big Ten, and its first NCAA Tournament appearance since 2015.

So given everything he experienced while at Ohio State, Bates-Diop said he had no regrets when reflecting upon all the times he sat at that table.

"It's a good feeling because I came so far, but it's the end of all of those moments before that made me who I am today," he said. "I'll always cherish all of those memories sitting at this table."

Bates-Diop noted that the most prominent thoughts that stand out in his mind from his four years in Columbus are in regard to the relationships he built with his teammates, particularly the ones from this past season. Ohio State went 17-15 in 2016-17 and parted ways with Thad Matta as head coach in June. Despite a coaching change, the Buckeyes, now led by Chris Holtmann, surprised many by finishing second in the Big Ten and advancing to the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

"What I'm probably going to miss the most is the locker room and the memories I've made here," Bates-Diop said. "We've had our ups and downs here. I've had a lot of teammates here. But the guys in the back, especially this past season, it's been the best year of my basketball career, dating back to high school and AAU, just because no one

Continued On Page 24



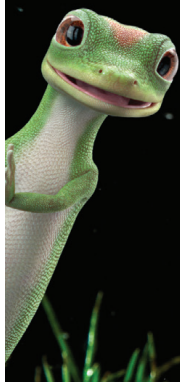
KEVIN DYE

THE NEXT STEP – Ohio State forward Keita Bates-Diop (33) declared for the NBA draft on March 26.

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OSU Hoping To Bolster Roster With Transfers

Continued From Page 23

thought we could do what we did. We all came together with the coaching staff, and we all became a family this year."

Bates-Diop said he'll treasure aspects of Ohio State beyond the basketball team as well.

"Just the campus in general, like High Street and all the stuff I've done all across campus," he said. "I drove down High Street to get here, and I was remembering all of the stuff, all of the memories I have from freshman year, and half of those restaurants my freshman year are closed now on High Street. So just looking back and looking at the stuff and how much stuff has changed. There's a bunch of apartments being built on High Street that weren't when I got here. I'll remember all of that stuff."

Prior to this past season, the last time the Buckeyes finished second or better in the Big Ten was in 2012-13, when they went 13-5 in the conference. Bates-Diop said he couldn't ask for a better ending to his Ohio State career than, in his final year, helping bring the program back to relevance both within the league and nationally.

"I think that's the best feeling and kind of one of the best parts about all of this," he said. "The last couple years have been down for Ohio State basketball, and to do what we did and what I did individually this year and to leave on that note, it's a bittersweet feeling but it's probably the best way to go."

"It was the best decision I've made to come here. I wouldn't change it for anything."

The 2018 NBA draft will be held June 21 at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Buckeyes Have Various Transfer Options

In November, Ohio State signed four recruits to its 2018 class – three-star forward Justin Ahrens from Versailles, Ohio; four-star forward Jaedon LeDee from the Kinkaid School in Houston; four-star guard Luther Muhammad from Jersey City (N.J.) Hudson Catholic; and three-star guard Duane Washington out of Chatsworth (Calif.) Sierra Canyon – to fill the voids left by Bates-Diop, Andrew Dakich, Jae'Sean Tate and Kam Williams. But Holtmann has said multiple times that he would like to add at least one graduate transfer to next year's roster to provide even more depth on the squad.

While a bevy of names have already been speculated as possible grad transfer candidates to Ohio State, 247Sports recruiting analyst Brian Snow told BSB that a pair of underclassmen should be mentioned – Davion Mitchell, who has transferred out of Auburn, and CJ Walker, who has left Florida State. As a true freshman in 2017-18, Mitchell (6-1, 200), a native of Hinesville, Ga., averaged 3.7 points and 1.1 rebounds per game while playing 17.1 minutes per contest on an Auburn team that won a share of the SEC regular-season championship. Walker (6-1, 195), who hails from Indianapolis and is set to visit OSU on April 6-8, started 34 of 35 games as a sophomore this past season for Florida State, which lost to Michigan in the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament.

"The only two really that I'm pretty sure you could point to as realistic options are CJ Walker from Florida State and Davion Mitchell from Auburn," Snow said. "Davion, he comes from the same high school as

(former Ohio State linebacker) Raekwon McMillan, so there's a familiarity with Ohio State there. (OSU men's basketball assistant coach) Mike Schrage is from Georgia, and he's recruited Georgia. CJ Walker, (Holtmann and his staff) recruited very hard at Butler and know very well."

With Mitchell being a freshman and Walker being a sophomore in 2017-18, both will have to sit out next season at the Division I program they choose because of NCAA transfer rules. Should either select Ohio State, Snow said the Buckeyes would gladly welcome the addition, even if they have to wait a year before using the student-athlete's services.

"Definitely (Ohio State would take Mitchell and/or Walker)," Snow said. "Why not? It's a valuable thing to have as a guy sitting out getting used to your program, getting a year older and stronger, better. It's a good thing to have. There's no doubt in my mind that they'd be open to that possibility."

Another underclassman whose name has come up as a possible candidate to transfer to Ohio State is Gahanna (Ohio) Lincoln product Matt Moyer, who started 20 games as a redshirt freshman at Syracuse this past season and averaged 3.2 points and 3.4 boards.

Snow, however, does not see Moyer returning to his hometown.

"I would be surprised if he ended up at Ohio State," Snow said. "I just think it's too close to home."

As for grad transfers, Snow said it is too early in the process to offer up any legitimate options.

"Honestly, I haven't heard much of any-

thing about grad transfers," he said. "I just know (Ohio State is) going to be looking at a lot of them."

Holtmann also was vague about graduate transfers when speaking to the media on March 26.

"Will we add to our roster?" he said. "Probably. We will try to add to it. How much? I don't know."

2019 Virginia Combo Guard Receiving Attention From OSU

Anthony Harris, a four-star combo guard from Fairfax (Va.) Paul VI Catholic, received an offer from Ohio State on Feb. 4, the same day he took an unofficial visit to Columbus and watched the Buckeyes beat Illinois, 75-67.

Harris, the No. 71 overall prospect and eighth-best player at his position in the 247Sports composite rankings of the 2019 class, told Snow that OSU is just one of a handful of institutions that are showing significant interest in him, though.

"I am hearing a lot from Xavier, Ohio State, Wake Forest, Virginia Tech, Maryland and a lot of other schools," Harris (6-3, 180) said.

What follows is a breakdown of how Harris feels about Maryland, Ohio State and Xavier.

Maryland: "They've been looking at me for a long time. They have told me to keep being a vocal leader and to keep doing what I am doing."

Ohio State: "They like tough guards and they feel I would fit in. They offered me not too long ago, and they want to get me up for a visit. We've been talking a lot and they have a great program."

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Handing Out Superlatives For 2017-18 Season

The 2017-18 season for Ohio State probably exceeded just about everyone's expectations, as the Buckeyes went 25-9 in Chris Holtmann's first year as head coach. The team's overall record alone does not do justice to what it actually accomplished this past winter, though. Holtmann replaced Thad Matta, the winningest coach in program history, in June, certainly not an ideal time to begin a new tenure. Nevertheless, Holtmann and his staff pieced together a once-depleted roster that produced a 15-3 Big Ten record, good for second in the conference, and qualified for the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2015. Now that the season has come to a close, it is time for BSB to offer some superlatives to the surprising 2017-18 Buckeyes.

Game Of The Year – There are a couple of options here – the 80-64 win over then-No. 1 Michigan State at home on Jan. 7 or the 64-63 victory at then-No. 3 Purdue on Feb. 7. While both were remarkable, Holtmann and players repeatedly mentioned that triumph over the Spartans as a key turning point in the season. Not only did that win come during Ohio State's 9-0 start to Big Ten play, it was when the team started to believe it could have a special season, Holtmann has said. The game itself was extraordinary, too. Often ridiculed for its dull atmosphere, Value City Arena had not been that electric in a long time.

Best Individual Performance – Sticking with that Michigan State contest, Keita Bates-Diop shone the brightest in a game that also featured Miles Bridges, the 2017-18 Preseason Big Ten Player of the Year, and Jaren Jackson,

the Big Ten Freshman of the Year and Defensive Player of the Year. Bates-Diop scored a then career-high 32 points, shooting 12 of 21 from the field. One could argue that performance in front of a national TV audience gave Bates-Diop the inside track to being named the Big Ten Player of the Year.

"The Michigan State game, the game was a CBS game and it was the No. 1 team in the country," Holtmann said. "When you see a guy perform like that on that stage, you're just really, really happy for that young man."

Most Improved Player – While Bates-Diop seems like the obvious answer, C.J. Jackson made tremendous strides in his second year at Ohio State, even though it got off to a rough start. After committing 12 total turnovers as the team's starting point guard in games against Butler and Clemson in late November, Jackson came off the bench against Wisconsin (Dec. 2) and Michigan (Dec. 4). From that point forward, the most turnovers he committed in one game was four (Feb. 4 vs. Illinois). Jackson also found his three-point stroke for the Buckeyes, shooting 37.9 percent (64 of 169) from distance in 2017-18 after shooting just 32.1 percent (26 of 81) the year prior.

Most Devastating Loss(es) – Penn State receives this honor without question. The Nittany Lions came into Columbus on Jan. 25 and shot a school-record 78.6 percent from the three-point line (11 of 14) to hand the Buckeyes their first conference loss. What made the outcome even more painful for Holtmann's club was that

Bates-Diop hit a deep three with five seconds left to tie the game at 79 before Tony Carr banked in a triple point just inside halfcourt as the horn sounded to give PSU the win. After getting blown out in Happy Valley, 79-56, three weeks later, OSU was on the precipice of exorcising its Penn State demons in the quarterfinals of the Big Ten tournament on March 2, leading 68-67 late. Carr, however, was the Buckeyes' kryptonite again, as he found Josh Reaves wide open in the lane with three seconds left for the game-winning dunk.

Most Touching Moment Of The Year – Though there were many ups and downs during the season, arguably the most emotional instance of the campaign occurred on Senior Night. Holtmann had each of the three seniors, as well as Bates-Diop, speak to the crowd after OSU's 79-52 win over Rutgers on Feb. 20. Jae'Sean Tate, the heart and soul of the team during his time as a Buckeye, was the last to address the fans. Trying to convince himself multiple times during his speech that he wouldn't cry, Tate eventually could no longer contain his emotions when he started thanking the other players on the team for the bond he had built with them. That prompted his teammates to join him at center court and give him a group hug.

"We're family," Tate said as he began to tear up. "Almost every day I get a text from one of you, and just having that supporting cast that you all care about me and you all think about me, it's great."

– Ryan McGlade

Xavier: "They say I could be a program changer. I am someone who is a guard that they like with my height, and also they like my ability to score the ball."

According to Snow, Harris is not in a rush to make a college decision. Though no specific timeline is set, the prospect plans to take more visits before coming to a final choice.

Former OSU Commit Decides To Turn Pro

Darius Bazley committed to Ohio State in August 2016 before decommitting eight months later. He then pledged to Syracuse last July and signed his letter of intent with the Orange in November.

The five-star prospect out of Cincinnati Princeton has now decided to skip college basketball altogether, though, as he announced via Twitter on March 29

that he plans to play next season in the NBA G League, formerly known as the Developmental League.

"This is a life-changing decision," Bazley (6-9, 200) told Yahoo! Sports. "Ultimately, playing professional basketball has always been my dream. It's always going to be the dream goal, always going to be the goal until I achieve it. This is going to put me one step closer to doing so."

"The G League will have the most to offer, considering that is the development league for the NBA. I will get more out of that than going overseas. The G League is the closest thing to the NBA."

Ranked eighth overall and fourth among small forwards in the 2018 class, Bazley is ineligible for the 2018 NBA draft because he's not one year removed from his high school graduating class. In recent years, players who chose to bypass their man-

datory year in college have typically tended to go overseas to play. For example, Brandon Jennings, Emmanuel Mudiay and Terrance Ferguson all chose the overseas route before becoming first-round NBA draft picks.

Bazley, a McDonald's All-American and

the top-ranked player in the state of Ohio, is the first five-star prospect to skip college for the G League.

Asked for his thoughts on Bazley's decision, Snow said, "My stock response is any kid can turn pro when he wants to turn, and good luck to Darius."

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McGuff Takes Pride Despite Disappointing Finish

As waves of fans clad in scarlet and gray fled for the exits March 19 at St. John Arena, the 2017-18 season came to a crashing end for the Ohio State women's basketball team.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Garrett Stepien

Despite five seniors leading the way on an experienced roster flooded with talent, highlighted by the program's all-time leading scorer in guard Kelsey Mitchell, the third-seeded Buckeyes folded in the second round of the NCAA tournament. In their own building, they were stomped by No. 11 seed Central Michigan, 95-78, before 3,571 in Columbus.

On an attempted path back home to the Final Four in downtown Columbus, which took place March 30 and April 1 at Nationwide Arena, OSU (28-7) was unable to get out of the opening rounds it hosted. As a result, Kevin McGuff's fifth year at the helm came to a highly disappointing end.

In the heat of the moment, McGuff's mind was on what Mitchell and her four classmates poured into the program over the course of the past few years. When asked by BSB how much the early loss to the Chippewas made the overall campaign feel like a missed opportunity, McGuff focused on what Ohio State was able to accomplish during an otherwise historic year.

"It's hard," McGuff said. "As I told the team, we're going to look back and I'm really proud of our kids, what we accomplished winning the Big Ten regular season and the

tournament. More importantly, we have really great kids. These kids handled themselves really well, on and off the court, and they're going to go on to do great things in life."

At the same time, McGuff acknowledged how the Buckeyes had been in a prime position to surge into the Sweet 16. The team was unable to feed off the highly partisan crowd in a tournament home game.

While he is proud of this year's team and what it accomplished, McGuff must now look toward next season. He is sure to miss the depth his seniors brought to the table. Ohio State graduates a core five of Mitchell (5-8), guard Asia Doss (5-7), guard Linnae Harper (5-8), forward Alexa Hart (6-3) and forward Stephanie Mavunga (6-3).

Junior guard Sierra Calhoun (6-0), who averaged 11.6 points and started in all 35 games, is the lone returning starter. The Buckeyes bring back only one other player from the regular rotation in forward Makayla Waterman, who averaged 3.5 points and 3.9 rebounds in 32 contests off the bench.

OSU had hoped for Jensen Caretti (6-1) to take off, especially after a neck injury to Waterman in February opened the door for more minutes in the rotation, but the sophomore guard never got going. In her 29 appearances, Caretti compiled averages of 2.4 points and 1.4 rebounds per game.

Beyond those three – Calhoun, Waterman and Caretti – Ohio State is alarmingly low in returning experience. While the midseason move by McGuff to put a pair of walk-on players on scholarship in forward Savitha Jayaraman (6-2) and guard Karlie Cronin (5-8) was a nice gesture, they each logged less than three minutes per game. Neither

Jayaraman (0.5) nor Cronin (0.1) averaged more than half a point per game.

Bucks Getting An International Boost

When Dorka Juhasz came over from Europe for a recent string of college visits in the United States, the four-star forward from Hungary fell in love with the idea of donning the scarlet and gray as a member of the Ohio State women's basketball team.

By the time Juhasz and family members completed her trips in January to Louisville, Missouri and OSU, her heart was set on joining the Buckeyes. After the month of February flew by, Juhasz made up her mind officially and took to social media on March 5 when she announced in an Instagram post her commitment to Ohio State.

"There were really great schools and teams who were interested in me during my recruiting process," Juhasz told BSB. "We enjoyed all the official visits. It was a great experience for us. Also, it helped me a lot in the decision making."

The pledge from the 6-4 forward gave OSU a big recruiting boost to its class of 2018, bringing versatility and size to a team that needed to rebuild its depth quickly after graduating the five seniors. When her process began to slow down and she trimmed her list to OSU, Louisville and Missouri, Juhasz's experience in Columbus ultimately sealed the deal.

"I chose Ohio State because I would like to continue my basketball career and my studies at the highest level, and I think Ohio State offers both," Juhasz said. "I have a chance to be successful on the court and in the classroom. The other reason is that I really liked the team, the coaches and the staff, just the overall program. I am sure they will help me to develop as a basketball player and as a person. I felt that this was the right decision, and I am very excited to be a Buckeye. I am looking forward to what the future holds."

Juhasz garnered additional interest from Duke, Oregon, South Carolina and Texas over the course of her recruitment.

A full profile of Juhasz was published in the March 27 edition of BSB Quickly. For signup information regarding BSB's 36 additional electronic issues, free to all print subscribers, see page 5.

OSU Gets Grad Transfer From BGSU

For as much help as Ohio State needs next season, the Buckeyes are about to receive an immediate boost from guard Carly Santoro.

Her father, Kory, announced on March 26 in a Twitter post that she would play her senior season at OSU. The Bellevue, Ohio, native spent her first three years at Bowling Green.

With the Falcons, Santoro developed into a dual-threat producer as a top scorer and rebounder. As a junior in the 2017-18 campaign, Santoro led BGSU in both categories, averaging 12.8 points and 8.7 rebounds per game. Santoro was also second on the squad in assists (1.6) and steals (1.5). As a team captain, she started all 30 games for Bowling Green, which went 11-19 overall and 3-15 in the MAC.

As a graduate transfer eligible to play right away for Ohio State in the 2018-19 season, Santoro (5-10) gives the Buckeyes a versatile option off the ball, filling the void in production left by Harper as a combo guard.

Santoro joins Lombard (Ill.) Montini Catholic three-star post Aaliyah Patty (6-3), Barrington (R.I.) St. Andrew's four-star guard Janai Crooms (5-10), Pacific graduate-transfer guard Najah Queenland (5-10) and Juhasz (6-4) as new team members next season.

Mitchell Becomes 4-Time All-American

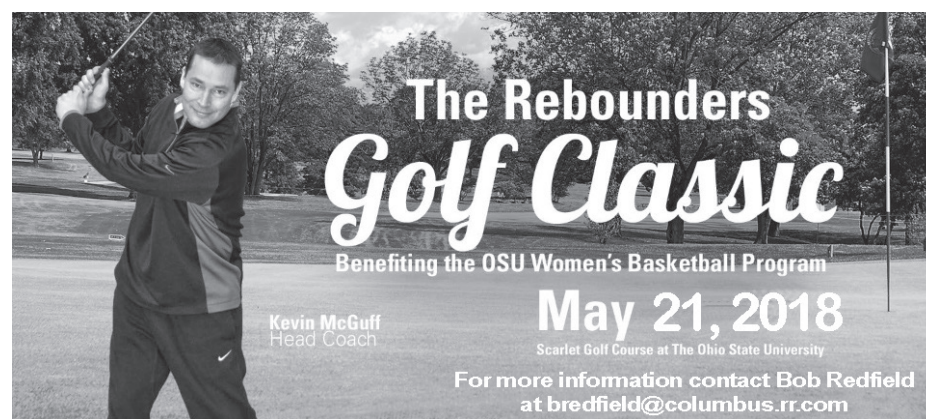
The list of achievements Mitchell attained during her four-year career at Ohio State was nothing less than legendary. On March 26, she added her latest accomplishment, becoming a four-time All-American. Mitchell, who was voted to the All-Big Ten first team four times and the Big Ten Player of the Year three times, appeared on the 2018 Associated Press All-America second team for the third time.

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She joined Baylor center Kalani Brown (6-7), UConn forward Gabby Williams (5-11), Iowa forward Megan Gustafson (6-3) and Notre Dame guard Arike Ogunbowale (5-8) on the second unit. Making up the first team were South Carolina forward A'ja Wilson (6-5), UConn wing Katie Lou Samuelson (6-3), Oregon guard Sabrina Ionescu (5-10), Louisville guard Asia Durr (5-10) and Mississippi State guard Victoria Vivians (6-1). Mitchell made the AP's first team after her sophomore season in 2016.

The AP honors come in addition to Mitchell being named a first-team All-American by the U.S. Basketball Writers Association for the fourth time, becoming the first player with four such honors in program history.

"I don't really have too much to say about (being an All-American)," Mitchell said. "I'm grateful for it, but that's not the stuff I really focus on.

"My grandmother always tells me, 'It won't hit you now, but it'll hit you when it's all over and you're not playing the game. When you think about it, you'll sit around and kind of wonder where your life went.' But I don't really think too much about it."

Where Was Chelsea Mitchell?

Because of how much attention her sister, Kelsey, drew over the course of a record-breaking senior season in 2017-18, it was easy to overlook Chelsea Mitchell's absence.

As a fourth-year junior, Chelsea Mitchell (5-11) played in seven games for Ohio State, averaging 0.7 points and 1.0 rebound. After her sparse appearances during the first couple of months, she slipped out of the picture in January.

A team spokesperson told BSB that Chelsea Mitchell left the team midway through the season due to class conflicts, electing to place a tighter focus on academics for the remainder of her spring semester. She has one year of eligibility left and could return to the program for her fifth season with the Buckeyes when she meets with McGuff at some point in the near future to discuss the matter, the spokesperson said.

While Kelsey Mitchell graduates and begins her professional career – she is likely to be a top pick April 12 in the WNBA draft – Chelsea Mitchell would still have family ties to OSU if she chooses to return to the team. Her father, Mark, has been an assistant coach on McGuff's staff since the head coach came to Ohio State before the 2013-14 campaign.

Smith Elected To Naismith HOF

Katie Smith was already on her way to the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame, and now the Ohio State legend is headed to the Naismith Hall of Fame.

In her first year of eligibility, Smith was selected with 12 others to be inducted into the 2018 Naismith Hall of Fame class, which will be enshrined Sept. 6-8 in Springfield, Mass. She joins Tina Thompson, Steve Nash, Jason Kidd, Grant Hill, Ray Allen, Maurice Cheeks, Lefty Driesell, Dino Radja, Charlie Scott, Rod Thorn, Ora Mae Washington and Rick Welts in the class.

The Logan, Ohio, native became an iconic athlete for the Buckeyes from 1992-96. Smith, who totaled 2,578 points with the Scarlet and Gray for third in program history, had a strong career from start to finish.

As a freshman, Smith led OSU to its only Final Four appearance en route to the national championship game in 1993 when she averaged 18.1 points per game and shot 50.4 percent in 32 games. She was the Big Ten Player of the Year in 1996, averaging 21.9 points and 4.3 assists in 34 contests.

When she graduated from Ohio State with her degree in zoology, Smith's success continued at the next level. After she became the first female athlete in OSU history to have her number retired, Smith played for the Columbus Quest in the American Basketball League from 1996-98, becoming a two-time champion and All-Star before the league folded. Smith and her Quest teammates received their final championship rings on March 31 in Columbus during the women's Final Four, 20 years after the league shut down.

Her career resumed in the WNBA, where she was selected an All-Star seven times and won the league championship as the Finals MVP in 2008 with the Detroit Shock. Smith, who also won gold medals with USA Basketball in the FIBA World Championship (1998, 2002) and Olympics (2000, 2004, 2008), retired in 2013.

Smith entered coaching shortly after her playing career ended, joining the New York Liberty's staff as an assistant in 2014 and getting promoted to associate head coach in 2016. When Bill Laimbeer left the Liberty

in October to become head coach and general manager of the San Antonio Stars, the Liberty promoted Smith. She begins her first season as head coach of the Liberty later in April.

One More Lady Buck Honor

Before Ohio State's collapse in the second round of the NCAA tournament, Kelsey Mitchell made the most of her last March in scarlet and gray. For her efforts and accolades, from being named Most Outstanding Player of the Big Ten tournament to moving to second all-time on the NCAA scoring list, Mitchell goes out as the Plank's Lady Buckeye of the Month one more time.

The senior guard fueled the Buckeyes both ways when she averaged 23.2 points, 4.8 assists and 1.8 steals in an average if 36.6 minutes in March.

Her last stretch with the Scarlet and Gray started March 2 in the quarterfinals of the Big Ten tournament, where she posted 22 points and four assists to pace an 82-57 rout

of Rutgers. In Ohio State's 90-88 triumph over Minnesota in the semifinals on March 3, Mitchell played all 40 minutes and led the Buckeyes past the Golden Gophers with her 30 points and nine assists. She stepped up once more in the final of a 79-69 victory against Maryland, drilling big shots down the stretch of her 25-point performance to lead OSU to the Big Ten tournament title and outright conference crown.

When Ohio State entered the NCAA tournament with the No. 3 seed of the Spokane, Wash., region and stormed to an 87-45 blowout win against No. 14 seed George Washington in the first round, the Colonials held Mitchell to 11 points but she remained a key facilitator of the offense's output with seven assists. In the 95-78 loss to No. 11 seed Central Michigan, Mitchell picked up the slack for an offense that struggled immensely. On her way up the NCAA's all-time scoring leaders list and past Southwest Missouri State's Jackie Stiles, who had 3,393 points from 1997-01, Mitchell put up 28 points in 38 minutes against the Chippewas.

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Former Michigan State Dean Charged In Sex Scandal

Former Michigan State dean William Strampel, who supervised former Spartans athletics doctor and convicted sex offender Larry Nassar, was charged on March 27 with criminal sexual conduct involving students enrolled in his medical school.

BIG TEN NOTES Garrett Stepien

According to a special prosecutor investigating the university, Strampel abused the position of power he held from 2002-17 to sexually assault female students and also ignored complaints against Nassar over the course of his time at MSU. East Lansing, Mich., police on March 26 arrested the 70-year-old Strampel.

He has since been charged with four separate crimes – misconduct of a public official, fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct and two counts of neglecting duty in relation to his handling of Nassar. The news comes just weeks after Nassar was sentenced to 175 years in prison for sexual abuse against former patients and other young girls.

Special prosecutor William Forsyth, originally appointed by the state attorney general to further investigate how Michigan State handled accusations against Nassar, announced the charges to reporters on March 27 in East Lansing.

“Strampel used his office to harass, discriminate, demean, sexually proposition and sexually assault female students,” Forsyth said.

A student at the College of Osteopathic Medicine accused Strampel of forcible sexual contact, according to the papers filed by the prosecution to state district court. Furthermore, the criminal complaint and affidavit allege Strampel solicited nude photos from at least one female medical student and state he “abused the authority of his public office, through threats and manipulation, to solicit, receive, and possess pornographic

images of women who appear to be MSU students.”

In February, Forsyth and investigators received a tip about Strampel’s behavior and acted on it, obtaining his computer and cellphone. A search conducted by the Department of the Attorney General eventually found up to 50 photos of female genitalia, nude and seminude women, sex toys and pornography on Strampel’s work computer.

“Many of these photos are of what appear to be ‘selfies’ of female MSU students, as evidenced by the MSU clothing and piercings featured in multiple photos,” the complaint said.

Among the videos found on Strampel’s work computer was a video described in the affidavit as “Nassar performing ‘treatment’ on a young female patient.”

Strampel’s neglect-of-duty charges originated from 2014 when he allowed Nassar to see patients despite being under criminal investigation and failed to monitor the former doctor’s on-campus conduct after police and Title IX investigations suggested he should change how he interacted with patients going forward.

At the arraignment for Strampel on March 27, an Ingham (Mich.) County judge issued a \$25,000 personal recognizance bond and added that Strampel must avoid contact with any current or former Michigan State medical students.

Strampel’s attorney, John Dakmak, said after the arraignment that his client maintains his innocence. For the charges against Strampel, the maximum penalty is between one and five years.

“My client denies that he ever engaged in any inappropriate touching of anyone – any student or otherwise,” Dakmak said. “He denies that there was any quid pro quo for sexual favors in exchange for any type of standing within the university or the medical school.”

Miles To Return To Nebraska

Nebraska head men’s basketball coach Tim Miles is returning to the Cornhuskers for the 2018-19 season, athletic director Bill Moos confirmed.

Miles, who has been at Nebraska since 2012, narrowly missed the NCAA Tournament after the Huskers went 22-11 overall and finished fourth in the Big Ten.

After weeks of speculation following Nebraska’s first-round loss to Mississippi State in the NIT, Moos told HuskerOnline.com on March 27 that Miles would be back for his seventh season in Lincoln.

“I’ve been in conversations with Tim, and he will be with us again next year,” Moos said. “We’re still working out some of the numbers and details.”

Miles is 97-97 overall and 46-62 in the Big Ten with the Huskers. The 22 wins Nebraska compiled in 2017-18 were second most in program history.

According to the contract of employment Miles signed with the Huskers on April 1, 2012, his deal expires on March 31, 2019. However, Moos told the Lincoln Journal Star that he planned to reach an agreement with Miles on an extension at some point after the Final Four.

Bridges Declares For NBA Draft

When Miles Bridges finished his freshman season at Michigan State, his return to the Spartans for a second year came as a surprise to many.

When it was time to decide again on his NBA future, the 6-7 wing had no reservations this time, declaring for the draft on March 28 and signing with an agent.

The Flint, Mich., native ends his two-year career at MSU after a sophomore campaign in which he averaged 17.1 points, 7.0 rebounds and 2.7 assists per game to earn first-team All-Big Ten and second-team All-America honors.

Bridges led Michigan State to the Big Ten regular-season title, but the third-seeded Spartans were unable to deliver in the NCAA Tournament when they lost in the second round to No. 11 seed Syracuse.

Bridges shared his decision and expressed gratitude for head coach Tom Izzo via a Twitter post.

“God couldn’t have placed me in a better place for these last two years,” Bridges wrote on Twitter. “I wanna thank Coach Izzo and

the rest of the coaching staff for giving a skinny kid from Flint a chance to play at such a legendary program. I would like to thank the academic support for helping me out everyday. I also want to thank Spartan Nation for welcoming me with open arms. ... With that being said I am entering the 2018 NBA draft and signing with Rich Paul and Klutch Sports.”

U-M QB Speight Could Return

As the quarterback situation at Michigan remains unresolved between an ongoing battle for the starting job and Ole Miss transfer Shea Patterson’s unknown eligibility, might the Wolverines find a familiar face back in the mix for the fall?

On a recent episode of Jim Harbaugh’s “Attack Each Day: The Harbaughs’ Podcast,” the head coach said quarterback Wilton Speight could possibly return to the team in 2018. Speight previously announced on Nov. 26 his plans to pursue opportunities elsewhere as a graduate transfer for his fifth and final year of eligibility, making a decision upon the completion of his spring semester.

“I don’t rule out (Speight returning) completely,” Harbaugh said. “Wilton is going to be a graduate transfer. Wilton graduates in May, and he’s weighing some of his options. I think he’s first taking a look and seeing what else is out there, who’s in need of a starting quarterback. But he hasn’t closed the door on coming back.”

Speight started for Michigan in 2016 and opened 2017 with the job before he suffered a season-ending back injury four games in against Purdue.

The Detroit Free Press on Jan. 25 cited a source close to Speight when the publication reported that he would be open to returning to the Wolverines if Patterson is ruled ineligible in 2018 by the NCAA. Patterson is currently awaiting word from the NCAA on if his hardship waiver will be approved.

QB Stevens Staying At PSU

After Tommy Stevens explored his off-season options to transfer from Penn State, the backup quarterback ultimately decided on March 28 to remain with the Nittany Lions.

“I did some searching around,” Stevens said. “I did talk to some schools. I looked around and found out Penn State is still the best place for me.”

Stevens has two years of eligibility left and is expected to continue sitting behind incumbent starter Trace McSorley in 2018 before Stevens could take over the PSU offense in 2019.

“Tommy and his family handled this unbelievably well,” said head coach James Franklin. “Obviously, as a coach, I am elated that Tommy is going stay with us.”

Despite being behind McSorley in Penn State’s logjam at the quarterback position, Stevens was utilized in a multitude of ways on offense by the Nittany Lions. As a sophomore in 2017, PSU played him at quarterback, half-back and receiver. Stevens completed 14 of his 27 pass attempts for 158 yards and three touchdowns while rushing for 190 yards and four touchdowns and catching 12 passes for 60 yards and two touchdowns.

“We can use him as a Wildcat quarterback,” Franklin told SI.com. “We can use him in some situational stuff in the red zone. We can use him in the four-minute (offense). We can use him as a receiver. We also want to look at him for some spots on special teams, as well. With Tommy, he wants to be a leader on the team and have a significant role.”

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OSU Takes 2 Of 3 In 1st Big Ten Series Of 2018

By JOE DEMPSEY
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

The Ohio State baseball team posted a season-high 19 runs in a 19-4 win over Toledo on March 28 before hosting Nebraska for a three-game set.

The Buckeyes (19-8, 2-1) fell to the Cornhuskers, 7-3, on March 30 then bounced back with a 7-4 win at Bill Davis Stadium a day later. On Easter Sunday, Ohio State closed out the series with a 15-14 victory.

OSU 19, Toledo 4

The Ohio State baseball team tallied 13 hits to defeat Toledo at Bill Davis Stadium on March 28. The win against the Rockets (6-15) marked the biggest margin of victory at home for the Buckeyes in exactly 10 years. The Buckeyes beat Penn State 15-0 on March 28, 2008.

"The thing going into today was getting everybody in the clubhouse in the right frame of mind leading into conference play," head coach Greg Beals said. "It was really important to us to have a good game tonight."

Sophomore Conner Pohl led the Buckeyes with a career-high six RBI, going 3 for 3 at the plate with a home run and two runs scored.

Ohio State starting righthander Jake Vance improved to 2-1 in a controlled start, striking out three in 4½ innings while allowing one unearned run on four hits and one walk.

Trailing by one, the Scarlet and Gray got on the board in the second with a bases-loaded, two-run single by Jacob Barnwell. The Buckeyes made it 3-1 with a sacrifice fly by Dominic Canzone in foul territory.

Pohl ripped a single down the left field line in the third for his first RBI, putting Ohio State's lead at 4-1. The Buckeyes pulled away further in the fourth inning. Canzone smacked an RBI double to left field, and Kobe Foppe bunted in another run. Noah McGowan hit an RBI single to center, prompting a pitching change from Layne Schnitz-Paxton to Nolan Silberman. Pohl stepped in and crushed Silberman's first pitch over the fence for a three-run homer, giving Ohio State a 10-1 advantage.

The Buckeye bats did not cool off in the fifth as they added five more runs. Foppe had an RBI single, Pohl had a two-run single, and McGowan and Dillon Dingler both had RBI walks, extending the home team's lead to 15-1.

Malik Jones started the bottom of the sixth with a pinch-hit double and later scored on a balk. Scottie Seymour had a pinch-hit RBI groundout, scoring Foppe. Dingler came through with a two-out, two-run single and extended Ohio State's lead to 19-1.

A sloppy eighth inning allowed the Rockets to add three runs on one hit and two walks, but they never threatened an historic comeback.

Nebraska 7, OSU 3

Ohio State fell in its Big Ten opener against the Cornhuskers despite a solid start from Connor Curlis, who went 6⅓ innings and tied his career high with eight strikeouts but allowed five runs (three earned) on seven hits and one walk, falling to 4-1 on the season.

Ohio State struck first on an opposite-field RBI double by McGowan to score Brady Cherry in the bottom of the first. The home team added two more in the second on a two-run shot by Nate Romans to dead center, his third homer of the year.

Nebraska battled back in the fourth beginning with a lead-off home run by Scott Schreiber. Jaxon Hallmark drove in Luke

Roskam on an RBI groundout. Gunner Hellstrom then knocked in Zac Repinski with a single to center, tying the game at 3.

The Cornhuskers added two more runs in the fifth due to miscues by the home team. Joe Acker led off with a single and then scored from first on an error made when Angelo Altavilla put down a sacrifice bunt. Schreiber then drove Altavilla home to give the visitors a 5-3 lead.

Nebraska added two more runs in the ninth on an RBI triple by Mojo Hagge and a pinch-hit RBI single by Ben Klenke.

Stellar pitching by Nebraska starter Luis Alvarado and reliever Jake Hohensee kept the Buckeye bats in check. Alvarado went 7⅓ innings, striking out five while allowing only three runs on seven hits and one walk. Hohensee earned his sixth save of the season, striking out three and allowing two hits and one walk in 1⅓ innings of work.

OSU 7, Nebraska 4

Ohio State starter Ryan Feltner struck out six in six innings, allowing four runs (three earned) on five hits and two walks and improving to 3-1 on the season in the Buckeyes' 7-4 victory. Griffan Smith stepped up in middle relief, and Seth Kinker shut the door on the Cornhuskers.

Canzone led off the bottom of the first with a double, and Foppe bunted him to third. Cherry hit a sacrifice fly and gave the Buckeyes an early 1-0 lead.

Barnwell continued his big week with a two-out, three-run homer in the fourth, extending the home team's lead to 4-0. The junior catcher went 3 for 4 on the day with the home run and three RBI.

Nebraska struck back in the top of the fifth with an RBI triple by Hallmark. He then scored on a wild pitch, cutting the lead to 4-2.

Canzone led off the bottom of the fifth with a single and took second base with his seventh stolen base of the season. McGowan drove in Canzone on a double to right center, making it 5-2.

Schreiber hit his second home run to lead off an inning in as many days on a shot to center in the sixth, keeping the Cornhuskers close at 5-3.

Altavilla led off the seventh with a single for Nebraska, and Hallmark drew a walk. Mike Addante attempted to put down a bunt and another error allowed Altavilla to score, Hallmark to take third and Addante to reach second. Beals then called on Smith, a freshman from Cincinnati, out of

the bullpen in a 5-4 game and the southpaw delivered.

"Griffan Smith was the highlight of the game for me," Beals said. "You bring a freshman in – and his first series in Big Ten play with runners on second and third and nobody out – and he gets two big outs for us."

With two down and runners still on second and third, Beals decided to intentionally walk the player who had been hurting the Buckeyes the most, Schreiber. The Buckeyes' head coach then called on his closer for the final out of the seventh.

Kinker got a groundout to escape the top of the seventh with a 5-4 lead. Pohl drove in Foppe with an RBI single in the bottom half, giving Ohio State a little insurance with a 6-4 advantage.

Kinker set the Cornhuskers down 1-2-3 in the top of the eighth, and the Buckeyes added another run in the bottom half. Foppe knocked in Romans by reaching on a fielder's choice and pushed the lead to 7-4.

Another 1-2-3 inning by Kinker gave him his fifth save of the season as he did not allow a hit and struck out three in 2⅓ innings.

OSU 15, Nebraska 14

Ohio State held on to defeat Nebraska 15-14 despite allowing 19 hits to win its first Big Ten series of the year.

Canzone, Pohl and Tyler Cowles led the way for the Buckeyes with four hits apiece and a combined seven RBI. Foppe was 3 for 4, and McGowan was 2 for 5 with three RBI and three runs scored.

After Nebraska took an early 3-0 lead, the Buckeyes got on the board in the bottom of the third when Cherry knocked Canzone in on a sacrifice fly. Ohio State used a big fourth inning to take the lead. Barnwell drove in Pohl with an RBI single to left field. Canzone doubled down the left field line, knocking in Barnwell and Romans to take a 4-3 lead. Foppe singled in Canzone, making it 5-3.

Ohio State kept it going in the fifth with an RBI double to left center by Cowles. Then Canzone came through with a two-out, two-run single to extend the lead to 8-3.

In the sixth, Pohl hit a two-run single up the middle, driving in Cherry and McGowan and giving the Buckeyes a 10-3 lead. Barnwell drove in Cowles with a sacrifice fly, and Ohio State took an 11-3 lead into the seventh.

Nebraska's bats came alive in the seventh when Hagge led off with a single and Schreiber hit a two-run home run to right. Addante drew

a walk with the bases loaded to plate Roskam and cut the deficit to 11-6.

McGowan responded with a three-run home run in the bottom of the seventh. Romans added an RBI single, scoring Pohl to push the Buckeyes' lead to 15-6.

The Cornhuskers refused to give up, scoring six runs in the eighth to get back in the game.

Still down three runs in the ninth, Repinski hit an RBI single to third. Addante then hit another RBI single to bring the Cornhuskers within one. But with two outs and two runners on, Kinker struck out Acker to seal the 15-14 victory and his sixth save of the season.

Adam Niemeyer improved to 2-2 on the season, tossing five innings and allowing three runs on seven hits and one walk with two strikeouts. The Buckeye bullpen struggled mightily as Ohio State relievers surrendered 11 runs (eight earned) on 12 hits and four walks in four innings.

"The next two weekends are going to be on the road," Beals said. "You need to win your home series. Hitting is contagious. Everything that happens in baseball is contagious. The game seems to have a flow to it. The flow was all ours and all offense early in the game, and then they caught it at the end too. I told the guys after the game this is a black-and-blue type conference. We know everyone in this conference is going to compete. We knew Nebraska was going to be tough this weekend. I have a lot of respect for the coaches in this conference. We have to be ready to go next week in Iowa."

Buckeye Action Recapped In BSB Quickly

Since BSB last went to press, Ohio State also hosted Georgetown for a three-game series on March 23-25. The Buckeyes opened with a 13-5 win before falling, 5-1, the following day. Ohio State clinched the series victory by beating the Hoyas, 5-4, in 10 innings on March 25.

The three-game set was recapped in the March 27 edition of the electronic BSB quickly. For signup information regarding BSB's 36 additional electronic issues, free to all print subscribers, see page 5.



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'98 Bucks Made Unprecedented Frozen Four Run

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The team that forged a bond that still holds firm two decades after a historic season almost came unraveled in the bowels of venerable Yost Ice Arena in Ann Arbor, Mich., on a winter's night in 1998.

Ohio State was getting beat, again, by bitter rival Michigan in what to that point had been an up-and-down season for the Buckeyes. Yes, there was the stirring rally from a three-goal deficit to beat Miami (Ohio) 5-4 two months earlier that showed flashes of the Buckeyes' potential. But there was also anxiety about the direction of the program as it headed toward christening Value City Arena as its new home almost one year to the day after the meltdown at Michigan.

The Wolverines were in the midst of a 6-0 thumping that would drop the Buckeyes to 9-10-1 overall and 6-9-0 in the Central Collegiate Hockey Association.

Worse, it was the 34th straight time (29 losses, five ties) over nine seasons that OSU had failed to beat the Maize and Blue.

As the saying goes, the Buckeyes were mad as hell and weren't going to take it anymore.

"Although a long time ago, very fresh in my memory was in Ann Arbor we came in between periods getting beat pretty good by Michigan and something happened and guys just started physically fighting with each other," then-junior defenseman Ryan Jestadt recently told BSB. "The older guys were tired of losing and the younger guys frustrated because nothing was going right. It was a huge part of us coming together after that blowup and working together better as a cohesive team."

That game on Jan. 3, 1998, was the low point but also the turning point.

During the week after the shellacking, OSU coach John Markell had player after player come to him voicing their concerns.

"They said, 'We're not having fun,' " Markell said at the time. "I told them as long as I was coaching at Ohio State there wouldn't be any fun in losing."

By those standards the remainder of the 1997-98 season was a barrel of laughs.

The next game the Buckeyes pounded Lake Superior State, 7-0, and coincidence or not, that was the first time the pep band showed up to the OSU Ice Rink.

That was the start of a magical run that culminated not only in Ohio State's first NCAA tournament berth but its only trip to the Frozen Four until this season.

The Buckeyes went on an 18-2-1 tear leading to the national semifinal against Boston College to finish the season with a 27-13-2 record (19-10-1 CCHA).

Not bad for a program that had gone 10-19-5 two years earlier in Markell's first full season after replacing Jerry Welsh. OSU was 12-25-2 for the 1996-97 season.

"I didn't think after my freshman year (1995-96) there was any way we could make it to a national tournament," former captain Dan Cousineau told BSB. "That's just the truth."

He said the goal at the time was to make it to "The Joe" – Joe Louis Arena in Detroit where the CCHA's final four was held annually.

Ohio State went beyond that tournament for the first time in 1998 despite heartbreak along the way. The Buckeyes beat Michigan in the semifinals but lost the title game in



COURTESY OF OSU ATHLETICS

SKATING ON – The Ohio State men's hockey team qualified for the Frozen Four in 1998 by beating Michigan State with Michigan fans cheering the Buckeyes on.

double overtime to Michigan State when a shot deflected off the skate of OSU defenseman Taj Schaffnit.

A little more than 12 hours after that defeat the Buckeyes learned they had been invited to the NCAA tournament for the first time.

"It was absolutely crushing (to lose)," Hugo Boisvert said in an e-mail to BSB from Germany, where he is currently coaching in the second division. "To be so close, to invest that much, being one shot away (from a CCHA title). Luckily we had the selection show right after. Huge mood swing. The excitement to go to the tournament was just amazing. We were obviously thrilled and relieved at the same time."

Boisvert, then a sophomore, led the CCHA in scoring with 58 points (23 goals, 35 assists) to become a first-team All-American that season. He was selected for the Ohio State Athletics Hall of Fame in 2013 and continues to closely follow his school from afar.

"My time at OSU was fantastic," he said. "To be honest, it surpassed all my expectations. I loved my time playing there, and OSU will always hold a special place in my heart."

The Buckeyes were placed in the West Regional with Yale and, interestingly, Michigan State for the elimination games under the format at the time.

"Once we saw our draw, we didn't want to overlook Yale but our eyes were on MSU," Boisvert said. "We dearly wanted a crack at them."

Looking back two decades, Cousineau agrees that Yale was more of an afterthought.

"I felt we were laser-focused on Michigan State," he said. "Yale was just a team we had to get through to get another shot at them."

Adding more intrigue was that the regional was held in Ann Arbor, Mich., at that same Yost Ice Arena where the Buckeyes had been blown out nearly three months earlier.

The Buckeyes came full circle. They handled Yale 4-0 and beat the Spartans 4-3 in overtime on a goal by defenseman Andre Signoretti to punch their ticket to the Frozen Four in Boston.

"We got our chance, and it was our time to shine," Boisvert said. "What a feeling it was to beat them and go to the final four. Crazy OT goal by Saggi. I still have chills thinking about it."

There are some parallels between the

1998 and 2018 squads. This year's team also lost the conference title game in overtime – to Notre Dame in the Big Ten tourney.

Like 20 years ago, the 2017-18 Buckeyes beat an Ivy League school (Princeton) in the first round of the NCAA tourney. Another similarity is that the Buckeyes will also be playing the Frozen Four semifinal this season in essentially the opponent's back yard.

In 1998, the game vs. Boston College was in the Fleet Center. Now, OSU plays Minnesota Duluth at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul, Minn., where several members of the 1998 team including Cousineau, Jestadt, Ryan Root and Schaffnit plan to attend.

Cousineau is impressed by this season's team after watching OSU beat Princeton 4-2 then dominate defending NCAA champion Denver 5-1 in the Midwest Regional final.

"I was amazed how dialed in they are," he said. "They looked very confident in what their game plan is. They don't seem to get too high, don't seem to get too low. I was so impressed. They never looked rattled. A lot of teams I've seen them play this year would get to that point where they looked like they were a little off their game."

From The Ground Up

The genesis for Ohio State's rise to national prominence began in the mid-1990s when then-president E. Gordon Gee pushed for a mammoth on-campus arena to counter plans by the city of Columbus to build a downtown facility to lure an NHL expansion team. The Buckeye basketball team would move out of St. John Arena, and the hockey team could say goodbye to the outdated bandbox it called home and hello to Value City Arena at the Jerome Schottenstein Center.

The OSU Ice Rink held about 1,600 people and had an ice surface 15 feet shorter than the regulation 200 long by 85 feet wide. The locker rooms were cramped, and everything reeked of the 1960s when it was built.

It was hardly a recruiting tool for Markell as he tried to revive a program that had reached its zenith in 1983-84 with the Pooley twins, Paul and Perry, taking the Buckeyes to their first No. 1 ranking.

Cousineau felt seeing plans for Value City Arena come to fruition was critical in not only getting better players but assistant coach Casey Jones – now the head coach at Clarkson – to Columbus.

"Who knows if Casey Jones would have come here without the promise of a new rink?" he said. "He was instrumental in recruiting some of those guys. Hugo. Eric Meloche. I don't think they'd ever be coming here if that rink isn't in the future."

"To have the chance to attend a school like Ohio State was always an easy sell for the coaching staff," Boisvert said. "The opening of the Schottenstein Center just took this to a brand-new level. I came on my official visit and was absolutely convinced I had found the place for me. I believe it certainly had something to do with our success."

Jestadt said getting a chance to play in Value City Arena at some point in his career was important in his decision to come to Columbus but not the main reason.

"The building of the new arena was very much a factor, but personally I really clicked with the guys on the team, Chris Richards, Dan Cousineau and Todd Compeau that I hung out with on my recruiting trip," he said.

Ohio State had one final full season in the OSU Ice Rink in 1997-98 with hopes of playing in the new building at the start of the next season. As it turned out, the Buckeyes didn't get to play their first game in Value City Arena until Jan. 2, 1999, against Michigan.

Markell said he was a little surprised by the success of the 1997-98 team that finished third in the league.

"We were picked fourth to eighth (in the 11-team CCHA), and I thought that was a good range depending on the transition of a young club," he said. "It's our senior leadership that came through in the end and showed us the way to do it. They became great leaders."

Root Of The Turnaround

That was never more evident than the aftermath of the 6-0 loss at Michigan.

"We felt like we had a better team than the previous years when I was there, and we felt like, 'We're not going to let this happen anymore,'" Cousineau said. "That loss galvanized ourselves. We said, 'We're not six goals worse than them. We need to change how we approach this to not let this happen again.'"

"It was really one of our leaders, Ryan Root, who stood up through the whole thing and was, 'Come on, guys, enough is enough.'"

Behind Markell's guidance and the players' leadership, the Buckeyes went on a 9-0-1 streak beginning with a 7-0 thrashing of Lake Superior State.

Paula Weston, who covered the Buckeyes for BSB that season and is now a writing and literature professor at Mott Community College in Flint, Mich., as well a writer for USCHO.com, remembers that game as a defining moment.

"It was the beginning of something, and I'm pretty sure everyone could feel it," Weston said. "That was the first game that season that featured the pep band in the corner along the same side as the benches, and everyone remarked on it. The place was sold out – more so, I think, because it was the last year that it would be used for men's ice hockey than for anything the team was doing at the time. That 7-0 win over Lake Superior State was the first win in that old barn of 1998, and the team didn't lose a single game in that building for that entire calendar year, sending it out in style before moving into the Schottenstein Center."



That victory got the Buckeyes rolling.

FROZEN FOUR FLASHBACK

Boston College 5, Ohio St. 2

April 2, 1998

FleetCenter, Boston

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	0	2	0	2
	1	1	3	5

Scoring

First Period: BC: Gionta, 8:40.

Second Period: BC: Farkas (Mottau, Bellefeuille), 10:24. OSU: Cousineau (McMillan, Root), 15:02. OSU: Cousineau (Compeau, Root), 18:21.

Third Period: BC: Reasoner (Gionta, Powers), 6:21. BC: Powers (Gionta, Scuderi), 17:25. BC: Reasoner, 19:17.

SOG: OSU 20, BC 42. PP: OSU 0-3, BC 0-6.

Goaltenders (Saves): OSU: Maund (37); BC: Clemmensen (18).

Att.: 18,089. Records: OSU 27-13-2; BC 27-8-5.

"I think it was at the end of a five-game homestand, after they'd beaten Notre Dame 5-3 on Jan. 25, when the captain, Dan Cousineau, came up to me after a game and said something about how amazing it would be to end their last full season in that rink by hosting a CCHA playoff series," Weston said in an email to BSB. "I think it was then, at the end of January, that it was just beginning to occur to the team that they were experiencing something special."

Cousineau was prophetic. The Buckeyes roared into the postseason with the best-of-three quarterfinals at home vs. Lake Superior State. It was the first time OSU had hosted a CCHA playoff series in 14 years.

Root scored the winner at 16:37 of the third period to win game one, the first quarterfinal playoff victory in 11 years. OSU finished off the Lakers the next night, 6-0, behind the third shutout of the season for freshman Jeff Maund.

"We were hard to play against, we competed every night and found ways to win," Boisvert said. "We had guys who chipped in at the right time, and we were the true definition of a team. We were unbeatable at home."

The Buckeyes advanced to Joe Louis Arena and a chance to slay the Maize and Blue monster in the CCHA semifinals. Maybe it was good that some of the Buckeyes didn't know about the long winless streak vs. the Wolverines.

"Was it really nine years?" Cousineau said. "That doesn't really surprise me because they were crazy good. You go back to any Ohio State-Michigan game, you really don't like them, especially when they're the good team. They have all the good players. It goes back to enough is enough."

"We had a number of players that could have played on that (Michigan) team. I don't think that was the case for some of the other teams I played on. You always get up for those games, but I think it was actually the first time we thought we could beat them. The other times you would get up for them and something goes wrong and you crumble."

Not this time. Michigan scored first, but Compeau made it 1-1 after the first period when he made a move around goalie Marty Turco, who wandered way out of his net. The Wolverines went ahead with 1:20 left in the second period only to see Boisvert get the equalizer with 10 seconds remaining in the stanza.

The goal was significant because Turco was 84-0-0 over the previous three years when leading after two periods. Louie

Colsant put the Buckeyes ahead 3-2 at 2:17 of the third. Richards made it 4-2 at 3:10 when once again Turco went skating into no-man's land and Richards put a backhand past him. OSU had to kill three successive penalties to finish off the game to stun the partisan crowd of 13,874.

"I loved that rivalry," Boisvert said. "We respected them but knew we could beat them. Incredible game it was. We found a way to win, and what a thrill it was to end the streak."

The next night a pro-Michigan State turnout of 15,120 witnessed a classic. Compeau had both OSU goals and Maund made 48 saves, but Chad Alban stopped 38 of 40 shots and Shawn Horcoff got the winner at 2:30 of the second overtime.

"Nobody was really down," Cousineau said. "They got a couple of fluke goals in that game. Even that overtime goal went off one of our D. We didn't feel they were that much better than us, and frankly we were kind of the favorites going into the tournament."

At the West Regional, Maund made

22 saves and Compeau again had two goals in the 4-0 win over Yale to set up a strange circumstance. Michigan as the host school was on the other side of the bracket and earlier in the day had already beaten North Dakota to advance to the Frozen Four.

Many of its fans stuck around to cheer for the Buckeyes against their hated rival Michigan State, just as a week earlier MSU followers rooted for OSU to beat the Wolverines in the CCHA semifinals.

The Buckeyes made their stay worthwhile. MSU led after one period. Signoretti and Meloche scored in the second, but OSU still trailed 3-2 entering the third. Neal Rech tied it at 3-3 and that's how regulation ended.

Signoretti then scored on a rebound of a Meloche shot at 8:47 of overtime to seal his place in OSU history.

"This was for me the best moment in my career," Jestadt said. "We felt unstoppable at this point. To feel the roar of the Michigan fans, who by the way would throw gum in our parents' hair when we played them, it was like being in our home rink. An odd

moment but we were happy to get the applause."

It was an unforgettable time.

"I do remember Andre Signoretti's shot from the right point and the way it ripped past Michigan State goaltender Chad Alban and how the entire place exploded," Weston said. "There's nothing like a common enemy to create the strangest of hockey bedfellows."

OSU couldn't produce more magic the following week vs. Boston College. Cousineau scored twice for a 2-2 deadlock before BC scored three times in the final 14 minutes for a 5-2 victory.

The loss didn't diminish what had happened that season.

"You know, to this day I feel like we accomplished something very monumental personally and for the hockey program ... but we didn't win," Jestadt said.

Worse, Michigan went on to defeat Boston College for the NCAA title.

"I regret not getting another shot at Michigan because we were the last team to beat them before they won the national championship," Cousineau said.



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Buckeyes Aren't Content With Semifinal Appearance

Mason Jobst and his Ohio State men's hockey teammates want everyone to know that making the NCAA tournament for a second straight season is not good enough. Neither is reaching the program's second Frozen Four 20 years after the Buckeyes lost in the national semifinal to Boston College.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

"It's great to make it to the Frozen Four, but as we saw last year, as great as it was to make it to the tournament, it's still not fun to lose," the junior captain said. "You still have the goal of winning a national championship."

By winning the Midwest Regional with victories over Princeton (4-2) and 2017 NCAA champion Denver (5-1) on March 24 and 25, OSU will play Minnesota Duluth on April 5 at 6 p.m. at the Excel Energy Center in St. Paul, Minn.

In the other semifinal that day, Big Ten rivals Michigan and Notre Dame play at 9:30 p.m. Both games are on ESPN2. The championship game is April 7 at 7:30 p.m. on ESPN.

Last season's appearance in the NCAA tournament, OSU's first since 2009, ended abruptly in a 3-2 overtime loss to Minnesota Duluth in the first round of the West Regional, a fact not lost on OSU (26-9-5) sophomore forward Tanner Laczynski.

"Anytime you lose in a big tournament, you're going to remember it," he said. "Not many get the opportunity to play the same team again in the NCAA tournament. It's awesome for us."

Out of last season's loss to the Bulldogs (23-16-3) came some good once the disappointment faded.

"Right after that game that really hurt," Jobst said. "Going in as a four seed, people weren't giving us much of a chance, then to take them to overtime, we knew we had a really good team at that point and to see them go all the way gave us some confidence going into this year."

UMD finished as the runner-up to Denver a season ago, but the Buckeyes gave them all they could handle after the Bulldogs took a 2-0 lead.

"Last year when we played them in Fargo (N.D.), they were the better team the last 40 minutes," Minnesota Duluth coach Scott Sandelin said.

He took notice of how his pupil, OSU coach Steve Rohlik, easily handled a Denver team that many favored to make the Frozen Four again and repeat as champions even though the Buckeyes were the top seed in their regional.

"I was impressed how patient they were, how well they defended and took advantage of their opportunities," Sandelin said. "I was impressed with their demeanor, their poise. They can play a fast game, they can score goals. It will be a really good matchup for us."

Rohlik's connection to the UMD program is one of several storylines. He joined the Ohio State staff in 2010 as an assistant to new coach Mark Osiecki after 10 years as an assistant with Bulldogs.

"Certainly being a part of that program, Scott gave me a chance going up there to be a part of something and be around good people," Rohlik said. "You never forget that. That's who you are, and then you take from that and continue to build and make yourself better."

UMD made the Frozen Four in 2004, and before leaving for Columbus, Rohlik helped recruit some of the players who won the 2011 NCAA title for the Bulldogs. As a side note, when Rohlik became OSU head coach in 2013, he hired Brett Larson as his associate head coach. Larson stayed for two seasons before returning to Minnesota Duluth where he and Rohlik had been on the staff together. Larson is still at UMD.

Rohlik, a St. Paul native who will attract attention in his homecoming, prefers that the focus be on his team's accomplishments.

"It's certainly not about me," he said. "This is about the players and the program no matter who we play."

Top Dog

Ohio State views itself as the outsider, the underdog among some of college hockey's blue bloods. The fact that Michigan, Minnesota Duluth and Notre Dame competed in the Frozen Four the last time it was in St. Paul seven years ago adds to its claim.

"We've already made a statement,"

Laczynski said. "A lot of people overlooked us even though we're a No. 1 seed in the NCAA tournament. Moving forward, teams are going to have to worry about us, not the other way around."

UMD of the National Collegiate Hockey Conference owns one title among its previous five Frozen Four appearances. The Wolverines have made it to the Frozen Four for the 25th time to tie Boston College for the most entries.

The last of Michigan's nine NCAA championships came in 1998, defeating Boston College after BC had defeated the Buckeyes. Notre Dame seeks its first national title in its fourth time at the event. The Fighting Irish lost to Denver 6-1 in the semifinals last season.

Jobst said the Buckeyes have been motivated all season by the Big Ten preseason coaches' poll.

"We were ranked fifth in the Big Ten so we've exceeded that," Jobst said. "Going into last weekend people we're still picking Denver regardless that we were No. 1. You try not to pay attention to it on Twitter, but you still go on there and see people picking UMD, not giving us any chance still. I don't know if it's NCHC that it's all about, but with three Big Ten teams we definitely made a statement."

Michigan (22-14-3) might have an even bigger chip. The Wolverines were tabbed for sixth in the conference in the first season under the guidance of Mel Pearson, who replaced retired legendary coach Red Berenson.

"We're just happy to be there," Pearson said. "It's bonus hockey for us now. This team doesn't get caught up in all the hoopla and the big stage, maybe because we haven't been there in a while."

Notre Dame (27-9-2) is anything but an underdog. The Irish won their first 16 league games in their first season as an associate member and downed the Buckeyes 3-2 in overtime on March 17 to win the Big Ten tournament.

"It's not surprising at all that three Big Ten teams made it," Notre Dame coach Jeff Jackson said. "It could have been four potentially."

That's where another storyline emerges. As successful as UMD was last season and the proud history it has before that, can the Bulldogs be the real underdog?

After all, they qualified for the 16-team NCAA field after losing their final two games in the NCHC playoffs. The team then had to wait. Denver, Michigan Tech, Air Force and Notre Dame all needed to win conference titles in order for the Bulldogs to earn an at-large bid.

The last of the pieces fell in place when the Irish downed the Buckeyes in OT. That gave the Bulldogs the final spot by a .0001 margin over rival Minnesota in the Ratings Percentage Index.

UMD, which lost seven seniors and had three players leave early for the pros after last season, showed it belonged in the NCAA tournament by beating Minnesota State and Air Force to win the West Regional.

"I think the way we got in was a spark for our team," Sandelin said. "It was dramatic, and I think the guys really appreciate the opportunity they got because that's how hard it is sometimes."

B1G Time

This is the first time there will be at least three teams from the same conference in the Frozen Four since the Western Collegiate Hockey Conference claimed all four spots (Colorado College, Denver, Minnesota and North Dakota) for the 2005 event at Value City Arena in Columbus.

"The conference this year was outstanding," Notre Dame coach Jeff Jackson said. "Every

team got better as the season progressed. Ohio State was the best team we played all season long."

A few numbers for the Buckeyes back his claim:

- 19-0-3 when scoring first and 18-0-1 leading after two periods
- 9-0-3 vs. non-Big Ten teams
- The NCAA's No. 1 penalty kill (.893 percent) and No. 7 power play (.239)
- Third in goals against (2.08) and tenth in goals for (3.25)
- Second in third-period goals (60), doubling the number allowed

Ohio State has relied on the outstanding play of junior goalie Sean Romeo, a strong defensive effort from front to back and depth among the forwards.

"We try to play solid structure in our game no matter the score," Rohlik said. "When our team is buying in and we're playing five-man connected, we're coming back and supporting and we have a goaltender like Romeo, it makes it tough on teams."

The Buckeyes have been able to compensate for the season-ending upper-body injury to senior Matthew Weis, their third-leading scorer. He has missed the past three games.

"He's contributing now just as much as he ever has," Romeo said. "He's been so supportive."

If the Buckeyes advance to the title game they will face a familiar opponent. They won all five games against Michigan, including 3-2 in overtime in the Big Ten semifinal on March 10. Notre Dame was 4-1-0 vs. Ohio State.

The OSU players know they are part of something special. Not only are they forever linked to the 1998 team, but with the women's hockey team making their final four in the program's first NCAA tournament, Ohio State is the only school to qualify for both Frozen Fours this season.

The women lost 1-0 in overtime to Clarkson in the semifinal. Now, it's the men's chance to make history. The current team knows very little about what happened in 1998. They hope their own legacy will be forged in St. Paul.

"For this program it's a huge step in the right direction, but another big step would be winning a national championship," Laczynski said. "If you want to be the best, you have to end up on top. Those are the teams that are remembered a little bit more."

Team Of Destiny?

Rohlik said this season's run to the Frozen Four was foreshadowed by equipment manager Tim Adams.

Adams, who was a student manager for the 1998 team, is in charge of routinely changing the code on the doors to the locker room in Value City Arena.

"Our code before the year (began) was 1998," Rohlik said.

Romeo The Icer Of The Month

Junior netminder Sean Romeo is the Varsity Club Ice of the Month for March. The Cary, N.C., native was 5-1 in the postseason to help the Buckeyes reach the Frozen Four for the first time since 1998.

He had a total of 33 saves in sweeping Michigan State 6-2 and 4-3 (overtime) in the Big Ten quarterfinals and stopped 29 Michigan shots in a 3-2 overtime victory in the semifinals. He also made 36 saves in a 3-2 OT defeat to Notre Dame in the title game.

Romeo stopped 53 of 56 shots (.946 percent) and was voted the most outstanding player of the Midwest Regional as OSU downed Princeton 4-2 and Denver 5-1.

VARSITY CLUB ICER OF THE MONTH For March



Sean Romeo
Junior Goalie
Cary, N.C.

Buckeyes Win Twice To Advance To Frozen Four

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

A 20-year wait for the next great Ohio State season ended when the final horn sounded at PPL Center in Allentown, Pa., on March 25 and the Buckeyes partied like it was 1998.

That was the year the Buckeyes made their only trip to the Frozen Four. Back then, OSU needed an overtime goal against Michigan State to advance to the national semifinal.

There was less drama this time in the Midwest Regional final – three third-period goals ensured that – but the 5-1 pounding of defending national champion Denver by the top-seeded Buckeyes was historic nonetheless.

"It's been too long between '98 and now," said OSU coach Steve Rohlik. "We all understand that. We all want to be there every year. In the same sense we understand how tough it is to get there."

OSU (26-9-5), which earned its first regional top seed, was scheduled to play Minnesota Duluth (23-16-3) on April 5 at 6 p.m. at the Excel Energy Center in St. Paul, Minn.

It's a rematch of last season's NCAA first round when UMD beat the Buckeyes 3-2 in overtime to spoil Ohio State's first appearance in the tourney since 2009.

"It wasn't really thought about until this past week when we knew we were playing in the (regional) finals and we knew if we got past Denver we'd have a little rematch there and maybe some revenge," junior captain Mason Jobst said.

Denver coach Jim Montgomery gives the Buckeyes a good chance to win their first title.

"They deserve to move on, and if they play like that, they're going to be national champions because that was a very impressive performance that they put on," he said after falling to the Buckeyes.

The other semifinal on April 5 features Big Ten rivals Michigan and Notre Dame at 9:30 p.m. Both games are on ESPN2.

The championship game is April 7 at 7:30 p.m. on ESPN.

Since losing in the 1998 national semifinal to Boston College to cap OSU's first NCAA tournament, the Buckeyes had seven losses over 20 years without another tourney victory until dispatching Princeton 4-2 in the regional semifinal on March 24.

Meanwhile, Denver routed Penn State 5-1 in the other semifinal, and many expected the Pioneers (23-10-8) to storm past the Buckeyes for the opportunity to repeat their national title. The last school to win consecutive championships was Denver in 2004-05 when current OSU associate head coach Steve Miller was on the Pioneers' staff.

"It feeds into our game by having a chip on our shoulder," junior forward Dakota Joshua said after the win over the Pioneers. "Not a lot of people had us coming out of this side. Hopefully people know who we are now."

The Buckeyes overcame the loss of injured senior Matthew Weis, the team's third-leading scorer, two days before the March 17 Big Ten title game vs. Notre Dame by spreading out the scoring and playing a five-man connected defense in the regional games.

Senior Kevin Miller had five goals entering the regional but had three scores, including two vs. Denver off assists from senior Christian Lampasso. Senior defenseman Matt Joyaux (goal, assist) had his second multi-point game of the season to help down the Pioneers.

Top scorers Tanner Laczynski (goal, two assists in two games) and Jobst (two goals in the two games) did their thing, and Joshua was a monster on faceoffs and the penalty kill. Laczynski, Joshua, junior defenseman Sasha Larocque and junior goaltender Sean Romeo were named to the all-tourney team.

Romeo stopped 53 of 56 shots (.946 percent) and was voted the most outstanding player. Critically, he didn't allow a goal until the third period of each game. The Buckeyes led Princeton 4-0 before the Tigers scored twice in the final 26 seconds. OSU was up 3-0 when Denver got on the board.

"He's been there all year," Rohlik said. "He's been our rock."

Tigers Tamed

OSU scored twice in a 20-second span of the first period to cruise to the 4-2 win vs. Princeton in a game that wasn't that close.

"The last couple games we haven't started the hottest, and that's something we addressed all week, that we wanted to come out and win the first five minutes," Jobst said. "I certainly think we did that."

The sophomore Laczynski, a Philadelphia Flyers prospect who one day soon may be playing in the same building for their American Hockey League affiliate (Lehigh Valley Phantoms), had a goal and an assist as did junior Freddy Gerard. Romeo made 23 saves to snap a seven-game winning streak for Princeton (19-13-4) before a crowd of 7,491.

OSU's special teams were the difference. Princeton, the top power play in the nation, was 0 for 6 until scoring on its last opportunity with 26 seconds remaining to make it 4-1.



The Buckeyes were 1 for 6 with the man advantage but scored on their second chance for a 1-0 lead at 13:32 of the first period. Jobst took a cross-ice from Laczynski and from the high slot scored his 20th goal. Sophomore Wyatt Ege got the secondary assist.

Miller made it 2-0 just 20 seconds later after sophomore Ronnie Hein gained entry into the zone after a pass from Lampasso. Hein found Miller driving the net for the deflection over the shoulder of goalie Ryan Ferland.

Laczynski potted his 16th goal at 3:55

Ohio State 4, Princeton 2

March 24, 2018
PPL Center; Allentown, Pa.

	1	2	3	F
	0	0	2	2
	2	0	2	4

Scoring

First Period: OSU: Jobst (Laczynski, Ege), 13:32 (PP). OSU: K. Miller (Hein, Lampasso), 13:52.



Second Period: No scoring.

Third Period: OSU: Laczynski (Gerard), 3:55. OSU: Gerard (Stork), 10:48. PRIN: Nelson (Grabowski, Hallisey), 19:34 (PP). PRIN: Hallisey (Becker, Nelson), 19:50.

SOG: PRIN 25, OSU 28. **PIM:** PRIN 8-27, OSU 8-16. **PP:** PRIN 1-7, OSU 1-6. **Goaltenders (Saves):** PRIN: Ferland (24), Halford (0); OSU: Romeo (23). **Att.:** 7,491. **Records:** PRIN 19-13-4; OSU 25-9-5.

Ohio State 5, Denver 1

March 25, 2018
PPL Center; 25, Pa.

	1	2	3	F
	0	0	1	1
	0	2	3	5

Scoring

First Period: No scoring.

Second Period: OSU: Joshua (Kearney, Parran), 3:47. OSU: K. Miller (Lampasso, Joyaux), 15:31.

Third Period: OSU: Joyaux (Laczynski), 9:27. DEN: McLellan (Mitchell, Terry), 11:21. OSU: K. Miller (Lampasso, Hein), 11:51. OSU: Jobst, 14:16 (EN).

SOG: DEN 31, OSU 24. **PIM:** DEN 0-0, OSU 2-4. **PP:** DEN 0-2, OSU 0-0. **Goaltenders (Saves):** DEN: Jaillet (19); OSU: Romeo (30). **Att.:** 5,124. **Records:** DEN 23-10-8; OSU 26-9-5.

of the third for a 3-0 lead. He redirected a pass by Gerard, who then made it 4-0 at 10:48 with his 12th goal. Senior Luke Stork assisted.

Matt Nelson scored on the power play to make it 4-1, and David Hallisey added a consolation goal with 10 seconds left for Princeton.

Pioneers Dispirited

OSU stifled Denver from the onset with a smothering defensive effort and broke open a scoreless game with second-period goals by Joshua and Miller before pulling away in the final 20 minutes as a crowd of 5,124 watched the 5-1 win.

"It was very hard for us to generate anything offensively," Denver's Montgomery said.

Joshua made it 1-0 at 3:47 of the middle stanza with a backhand from the slot for his 15th goal after a shot by Brendon Kearney bounced around and landed at his feet. Miller converted a slick no-look centering pass from Lampasso at 15:31 to double the lead.

The Buckeyes pushed the lead to 3-0 at the 9:27 mark of the third when Laczynski delivered a hard check in the defensive zone, skated down the right wing and spotted a rushing Joyaux for his second goal.

Denver made it interesting at 11:21 when Tyson McLellan scored, but the Buckeyes responded 30 seconds later when Lampasso once again found Miller.

The desperate Pioneers pulled their goalie with more than six minutes to play, and Jobst made them pay by flipping in a 170-footer at 14:16 for the 5-1 margin.

Romeo made 15 of his 30 saves in the third period. Tanner Jaillet had 19 stops for Denver as the Pioneers' five-game winning streak came to an end.

Now it's off to the Frozen Four in St. Paul, which happens to be Rohlik's hometown.

"It's huge for the program," Miller said. "We haven't been here for 20 years. I am just proud of the program that we are getting back to this point. I am a senior now and the past four years we have developed into a really great team."



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BUCKEYE BRIEFS

Men's Lacrosse Streak Reaches 4

The Ohio State men's lacrosse team saw its losing streak extended to four games in its Big Ten opener when the Buckeyes fell to Penn State, 12-4, on March 31 in Columbus. The loss moved Ohio State to 5-5 on the season and 0-1 in the conference while the Nittany Lions improved to 7-3 overall and 1-0 in the Big Ten.

The loss came on the heels of consecutive losses to Towson, Denver and Notre Dame, with only the Denver game coming on the road.

Against Penn State, the Buckeyes fell behind early as the Nittany Lions scored four unanswered goals in the opening period. Ohio State bounced back with goals from Jack Jasinski, JT Bugliosi and Jackson Reid in the second, but Penn State scored twice as well, taking a 6-3 lead into the locker rooms.

After the break, the Nittany Lions scored two quick goals before Ohio State's Tre LeClaire made it 8-4 with 11:03 left in the third quarter. Penn State added three more goals before the end of the frame and another in the fourth, though, to storm away with the win in front of 2,361 at Ohio Stadium.

Colin Chell finished as Ohio State's only multipoint scorer with two assists, while John Kelly had one helper as well. Buckeye goalie Josh Kirson made 12 saves in the loss, falling to 0-2 on the year.

Kevin Hill (2 goals, 2 assists), Ryan Keenan (3 goals), Mac O'Keefe (1 goal, 2 assists), Dylan Foulds (2 goals), John Nostrant (2 goals) and Nick Spillane (1 goal, 1 assist) all had multipoint days for the Nittany Lions.

Although the final score line was lopsided, Ohio State was even with Penn State as each team tallied 35 total shots. The Nittany Lions won the ground-ball battle, 38-25, in addition to coming away with 13 of 20 faceoffs and converting 2 of 3 man-up opportunities.

Women's Lacrosse Splits Home Matchups

The Ohio State women's lacrosse team hosted Robert Morris on March 28 and came away with a 7-3 win before falling to Penn State, 18-10, in Columbus on March 31. The Buckeyes moved to 5-6 overall this season while dropping to 1-2 in Big Ten play.

Against Robert Morris (4-6), Ohio State responded to an early goal from the Colonials with strikes from McKayla Conti and Baley Parrott to take a 2-1 lead into halftime. After the break, Conti picked up her second goal of the game with 28:12 on the clock before Sara Dickinson and Parrott scored in the next seven minutes to make it 5-1. The teams split the final four goals of the day, including a goal from Erika Keselman and Parrott's third for Ohio State.

Parrott's hat trick led the Buckeyes while Conti added an assist to her two goals. Goalie Jill Rizzo made 13 saves, including eight after the halftime break.

The Buckeyes and Colonials each tallied 25 shots.

Three days later, Ohio State found itself on the wrong end of a blowout in its eight-goal loss to No. 18 Penn State (8-4, 3-0).

Through the first half, the game remained close as a Lindsay Epstein goal with 24 seconds on the clock made it a 7-6 deficit for Ohio State at the break. The second half was a different story, though, as Penn State scored nine of the first 11 goals before Molly Wood and Riley Ewing pulled two back to get Ohio State within six with 6:03 remaining. From there, the Nittany Lions added two more tallies to cushion their lead.

Parrott again finished with three goals while Wood had two. Dickinson and Mackenzie Maring tallied a goal and an assist each for Ohio State while Rizzo made 16 saves.

Penn State outshot the Buckeyes, 43-25, for the game while Ohio State had 18 ground-ball pickups to 15 for the Nittany Lions.

OSU Softball Picks Up 2 Big Ten Wins

After the Ohio State softball team's March 28 matchup with Kentucky was postponed, the Buckeyes picked up their first two Big Ten wins of the year by taking two of three against Wisconsin (16-13, 2-2) in Columbus from March 30-April 1. The series brought Ohio State's overall record to 21-8 and conference mark to 2-4.

A makeup date for the game against Kentucky has not yet been announced.



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After a Big Ten-opening three-game sweep at the hands of Indiana in Bloomington earlier in March, the Buckeyes got their first conference win of the year with a 9-7 victory over the Badgers on March 30.

Going into the bottom of the sixth, Ohio State was trailing, 7-4, before the Buckeyes responded with five runs to take the lead.

Ohio State third baseman Niki Carver opened the home half of the sixth with a single, followed by a double from center fielder Taylor White and an intentional walk of shortstop Lilli Piper. With the bases loaded, second baseman Emily Clark hit a two-run single before first baseman Ashley Goodwin had an RBI groundout to tie the game at 7. Designated player/pitcher Shelby McCombs followed with a two-run homer to put the Buckeyes ahead for good.

Piper finished 3 for 3 with a double while McCombs was 3 of 4 with two RBI. White scored three runs while hitting two doubles in three at bats.

Morgan Ray got the start for Ohio State but had a rough outing, lasting just 1½ innings while allowing three hits, four walks and four runs. McCombs struggled with control after replacing Ray, issuing nine walks and a hit with three runs in 4½ innings while striking out five. Kat Duvall replaced McCombs in the circle and got the win in her first decision of the year after pitching 1½ innings and striking out all four batters she faced.

On the final day of March, the Badgers got revenge at Buckeye Field with a 3-1 victory. The teams entered the seventh inning with Wisconsin ahead, 2-1, before the Badgers scored to take a two-run lead. In the bottom of the frame, Ohio State got a one-out double from catcher Becca Gavin but couldn't generate any more offense.

The Buckeyes finished with six hits, compared to eight for Wisconsin, while both teams committed two errors each.

Duvall (1-1) started and took the loss for Ohio State, allowing two runs on seven hits and two walks over 3½ innings with two strikeouts. Ray pitched the final 3½ innings, allowing one hit, three walks and an unearned run with three strikeouts.

The Buckeyes celebrated Easter Sunday with a 7-0 shellacking of the Badgers, thanks to McCombs, who went 2 for 2 and hit a fifth-inning grand slam while pitching a complete-game shutout. In her seven innings of work, McCombs (9-2) walked eight while giving up just three hits and striking out eight Badgers batters.

OSU Synchronized Swimming Wins National Title (Again)

The Ohio State synchronized swimming team won its second consecutive and 31st overall U.S. Collegiate National Championships on March 31 at Oro Valley Aquatic Center in Oro Valley, Ariz. The Buckeyes compiled 96 points to win the title, edging second-place Stanford's 90 points and third-place Lindenwood's 72 points.

Monica Velazquez-Stiak won the Individual High Point Award. The senior from Phoenix capped her career with two gold medals and one silver medal to lead OSU.

Velazquez-Stiak and senior Alyssa Hoying won the duet free final, coming together for an 83.7667. Stanford followed with Erica Slavin and Caitlin Klauer (83.5000) in second, while teammates Rachel Hyon and Jacklyn Luu (82.9000) finished third for the Cardinal.

Ohio State's squads in the team free final finished first and third, respectively, with scores of 84.8667 and 81.667. Stanford placed second between the two Buckeye teams, scoring 84.8000.

In solo free, Stanford's Clare McGovern

(83.4000) edged sophomore Laila Huric (82.8000) for first place. Incarnate Word's Camille Guerre rounded out the top three with 79.7333.

Stanford's McGovern, Slavin and Klauer finished first in the trio free final with a score of 83.4333. OSU's trio of senior Noelle St. John, Hoying and Velazquez-Stiak compiled 82.4000 for second. Lindenwood's Kyra Hoevertsz, Shelby Kasse and Rebecca Richardson tallied 79.7667 in third.

Men's Tennis Takes 2 Big Ten Contests

After the Ohio State men's tennis team started the weekend off March 30 with a 5-2 win over Minnesota, the Buckeyes completed their Big Ten sweep April 1 when they cruised to a 6-1 victory over Wisconsin.

With wins in both conference contests on the road, No. 2 OSU improved to 18-2 overall and 5-0 in the Big Ten.

Ohio State's triumphs against the Golden Gophers (10-5, 3-1) and Badgers (11-7, 3-2) were equally impressive. The Buckeyes bounced Minnesota for its first conference loss then handed Wisconsin its first home defeat of the year and snapped a five-match winning streak for the Badgers.

Against the Gophers at Baseline Tennis Center in Minneapolis, the Buckeyes received a best-punch effort from their opponents. Minnesota maintained a tight match down the stretch in singles, but not before OSU jumped out in front during doubles. The duo of senior Mikael Torpegaard and freshman John McNally recorded a 6-3 defeat of Matic Spec and Eli Ogilvy, while sophomores Alex Kobelt and Kyle Seelig secured a 6-1 downing of Marino Alpeza and Stefan Milicevic for the doubles point.

However, after the Buckeyes jumped out for a strong start in singles by taking four of the first six sets – highlighted by junior Martin Joyce's 6-2, 6-0 defeat of Jackson Allen – the Gophers got on a run with straight-set wins by Spec against sophomore JJ Wolf and Milicevic over McNally. From there, each of the last three matches boiled down to the third set. Seelig and freshman Tim Seibert pulled out respective victories over Josip Kristanovic (7-6 (7-5), 1-6, 6-3) and Ogilvy (6-3, 3-6, 6-3), followed by Torpegaard over Felix Corwin (6-4, 5-7, 6-2) to cement the team win for OSU.

When Ohio State trekked to Madison, Wis., two days later at Nielsen Tennis Stadium, the Buckeyes made quick work of the Badgers. OSU went ahead in doubles thanks to fifth-year senior Matt Mendez and junior Hunter Tubert's win over Lamar Remy and Jesper Freimuth, followed by McNally and Torpegaard defeating Daniel Soyfer and Osgar O'Hoisin. Joyce and Wolf were tied in a 4-4 match with Josef Dodridge and Chema Carranza when McNally and Torpegaard recorded their 6-4 win to clinch the doubles point.

The momentum spilled for Ohio State into singles where the Buckeyes began to pull away on Torpegaard's 6-0, 6-1 defeat of Dodridge and Wolf's 6-1, 6-4 downing of Remy. OSU clinched the team win on Seibert's 6-1, 6-4 victory over Carranza.

Women's Tennis Splits With Michigan Opponents

Hosting a pair of Big Ten foes from up north, the Ohio State women's tennis team split its weekend matches against Michigan and Michigan State. In their two bouts at the Varsity Tennis Center in Columbus, the Buckeyes began March 30 with a 4-3 loss to the Wolverines before bouncing back April 1 for a 5-2 win over the Spartans. OSU (9-5, 3-2) had its three-match winning streak snapped

by U-M (9-8, 5-0) prior to rebounding against MSU (13-5, 4-2).

Ohio State started strong against Michigan, taking the doubles point despite the duo of sophomore Danielle Wolf and freshman Emma DeCoste dropping a 6-2 result to Mira Ruder-Hook and Alyvia Jones in the opening match. The Buckeyes answered with a 6-3 victory from freshman Mary Beth Hurley and senior Olivia Sneed over Chiara Lommer and Lera Patiuk, followed by a 7-5 win from the No. 29 tandem of senior Anna Sanford and redshirt freshman Shiori Fukuda against Kate Fahey and Brienne Minor.

In singles, OSU continued to surge with Sanford's straight sets (6-3, 6-3) win over No. 23 Fahey. However, Michigan stormed back down the stretch. DeCoste fell (6-2, 6-3) to Jones, but Fukuda won in straight sets (6-1, 6-4) against Minor. Then the Wolverines went on a tear, winning the final three matches and handing Ohio State the team loss. The Buckeyes dropped two matches on a 1-6, 6-3, 6-4 loss by Sneed to Lommer and a 6-0, 5-7, 6-2 loss for Wolf against Ruder-Hook. U-M won on Bella Lorenzini's 7-6 (7-5), 7-5 defeat of Hurley.

OSU returned to the courts two days later for the 5-2 triumph over Michigan State. Ohio State cemented the doubles point on a pair of 6-1 wins from Sneed and Hurley over Habiba Shaker and Sara Kuutilla, followed by DeCoste and Wolf against Ava Thielman and Lexi Baylis.

Despite an initial loss (6-2, 6-0) for DeCoste to Davina Nguyen, the Buckeyes did enough down the stretch to take singles. Sneed dominated Kuutilla for a straight-sets victory (6-1, 6-2). Hurley dropped her match (6-4, 6-1) to Samantha Memije, but Sanford got OSU back on track with her straight-sets win (6-4, 6-2) over Aslina Chua. Fukuda finalized the team win with her victory (6-1, 7-5) against Shaker. Wolf won the final match over Emily Metcalf (4-6, 6-2, 6-2).

Track & Field Competes At Raleigh Relays

Represented by distance runners from the men's and women's squads, the Ohio State track and field team competed against over 120 schools March 30-31 at the Raleigh Relays.

Hosted by N.C. State at Paul Derr Track in Raleigh, N.C., a handful of Buckeyes registered respectable readouts.

The notable finishers from OSU for the men included Kevin Blank. In his field of 128 athletes, the senior logged a time of 3:47.43 for ninth place in the 1,500-meter run.

Christine Frederick, meanwhile, managed the best result for the women. Against her pool of 63 individuals in the 10,000-meter run, the senior clocked a time of 34:24.74 for 11th place. Frederick's finish was the second-fastest time in program history for the event. On May 23, 1980, Beth Sheridan set the record when she crossed the finish line with her time of 34:05.60.

Beyond the top times by Blank and Frederick, sophomore Abby Nichols and junior Luke Landis ran to top-half finishes for Ohio State. Out of the 136 runners to finish the women's 5,000-meter race, Nichols registered a personal-best 16:31.85 to place 26th. In the men's 5,000-meter race, Landis logged a time of 14:41.98 for 61st place among the 149 athletes to finish the event.

Men's Volleyball Adds 2 Ranked Wins

In a tough task with a pair of top-10 matchups, the Ohio State men's volleyball team rose to the occasion. Between a four-set victory over Loyola-Chicago on March 29 and a three-set sweep of Lewis on March 31, the Buckeyes bounced both opponents at St. John Arena in Columbus and inched further up the Midwestern Intercollegiate Volleyball Association standings.

No. 9 OSU (19-4, 10-2 MIVA) is tied for first place atop the conference standings with No. 6 Loyola-Chicago (20-5, 10-2), while No. 10 Lewis (16-10, 7-5) sits two spots behind.

Ohio State did damage in league play by ending March with wins over the Ramblers and the Flyers. If the Buckeyes win both of their final two matches of the season, April 6 at Fort Wayne and April 7 at Ball State, they clinch at least a share of the regular-season title and the conference tournament's top seed.

The Buckeyes began their weekend on a strong start after they handled Loyola-Chicago in four sets (25-20, 25-16, 39-41, 25-19). OSU's offense surged behind senior outside hitter Maxime Hervoir, who compiled a career-high 24 kills and a .463 attacking rate. It was his fourth match of at least 20 kills this season. Senior outside hitter Nicolas Szerszen added 24 points on 20 kills, three aces and two block assists. Fifth-year senior middle blocker Nick Laffin and freshman outside hitter Blake Leeson fortified the center, combining for 16 kills and attacking .560 together.

After handling the Ramblers, Ohio State carried the momentum into its domination of Lewis in three sets (25-18, 25-18, 25-19) for the team's eighth straight victory. The Buckeyes set the tone from the service line with 10 aces, out-killing the Flyers by a 44-30 margin and combining for a team attacking rate of .417.

Junior setter Sanil Thomas kept OSU's offense flowing with 37 assists. During the three sets of the match, Ohio State trailed only once – by one point. Hervoir and Szerszen combined for 25 kills, while Jake Hanes contributed 12 kills and Thomas had a team-high eight digs.

Since BSB last went in the mail on March 20, the Buckeyes have continued their seasons in full force. Action from March 20-26 was recapped in the March 27 edition of the electronic BSB Quickly. For sign-up information regarding BSB's 36 additional electronic issues, free to all print subscribers, see page 5.

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Meyer's Buckeyes Have Dominated The NFL Draft

We all see the recruiting ratings on signing day each year, but how do all those four-star and five-star recruits turn out? To test Urban Meyer's success at Ohio State, I decided to take a look at the last three NFL drafts.

EXNER POINT Rich Exner

Since Meyer's first recruiting class was in 2012, the 2015 draft was the first in which Meyer-recruited Buckeyes were eligible to enter the NFL, followed by 2016 and 2017.

Of course, a few of the players drafted during this time period were at OSU before Meyer, but this three-year look gives us a fairly good way to judge Meyer against the competition across the country.

The result is what you would expect.

Ohio State and Alabama lead the nation with 24 players from each school selected over

the last three NFL drafts. Florida is third with 23, followed by Clemson (20), Miami (Fla.) (18), and then LSU (17), Florida State (17) and Michigan (17).

For first-round picks, Ohio State leads with eight, followed by Alabama (6), Clemson (5) and Florida (5).

Meyer's 1st-Rounders

All the first-rounders were Meyer recruits. There were none in 2015. The five in 2016 were Joey Bosa, Ezekiel Elliott, Eli Apple, Taylor Decker and Darron Lee. The three in 2017 were Marshon Lattimore, Gareon Conley and Malik Hooker.

Decker was part of Meyer's first recruiting class in 2012. Apple, Conley, Bosa, Elliott and Lee all signed with the Buckeyes in 2013. Lattimore and Hooker were 2014 recruits.

Tressel/Meyer Era

Digging a little deeper, I took a look at OSU draft success during the Jim Tressel and Meyer eras, beginning with the 2004 draft, three seasons removed from Tressel's first recruiting

class. (Note: Remember Luke Fickell was never OSU's head coach on signing day.)

In drafts from 2004 through 2017, the national top 10 are:

1. Ohio State, 90, including a leading 24 first-rounders.
- T-2. USC, 87 (18 first-rounders)
- T-2. LSU, 87 (18)
4. Alabama, 81 (22)
5. Florida State, 78 (16)
6. Florida, 75 (16)
7. Oklahoma, 74 (10)
8. Miami (Fla.), 73 (16)
9. Georgia, 70 (10)
10. Clemson, 63 (10)

Just outside the top 10, at No. 11, is Michigan with 55 draft picks. That number includes nine first-rounders – quite a drop-off from the 24 for Ohio State.

2018 NFL Draft

It will be interesting to see how this year's draft turns out.

There probably are more mock drafts floating around the Internet than there are available

players to draft. But, to narrow things down a bit, I checked the latest on NFL.com, where six people provided their projections.

Denzel Ward, recruiting class of 2015, was slotted as a sure first-rounder, slotted at fifth overall, seventh, seventh, eighth, ninth and 13th.

Sam Hubbard, recruiting class of 2014, was projected as a first-rounder in two of the mock drafts, 24th and 25th overall.

Jerome Baker, recruiting class of 2015, was projected as a first-rounder by one writer who predicted he will go 31st overall.

As for a full seven-round mock draft, one take from Bleacher Report predicted seven Buckeyes will be drafted, including three in the first round. Bleacher Report projected:

- Ward going in the first round, sixth overall.
- Billy Price, recruiting class of 2013, going in the first round, 26th overall.
- Hubbard going in the first round, 31st overall.
- Jamarco Jones, recruiting class of 2014, going in the second round, 49th overall.
- Baker going in the third round, 73rd overall.
- Tyquan Lewis, recruiting class of 2013, going in the third round, 98th overall.
- Jalyn Holmes, recruiting class of 2014, going in the fourth round, 109th overall.
- Damon Webb, recruiting class of 2014, going in the sixth round, 185th overall.

Football, Not Basketball School

One more reminder that Ohio State is a football school. I just listed all those football Buckeyes who have been drafted lately. But when it comes to basketball, you'll have to look hard to find a former Buckeye in this year's NBA playoffs.

The lone Buckeye in the postseason will be Evan Turner, with the Portland Trailblazers. It appears as if Portland will be the third seed in the West.

The only other Buckeyes currently in the NBA will be left out: D'Angelo Russell with the Brooklyn Nets, Kosta Koufos with the Sacramento Kings and Mike Conley with the Memphis Grizzlies.

One reason the Grizzlies are not in playoff contention is that Conley missed all but 12 games this season with a heel injury.

Million-Dollar Coaches

Ohio State generated a lot of headlines earlier this winter when it made two assistant football coaches million-dollar assistants, with contracts that will pay Greg Schiano \$1.5 million and Ryan Day \$1 million in base pay this season.

But, in reality, the average compensation for Ohio State assistants was already close to \$1 million a year.

Deep in the mounds of paperwork each school must file with the NCAA each year is a line for assistant football coaching pay and benefits. The dollars aren't broken out by person, but rather for assistants as a group.

The latest report, for the 2016-17 school year, shows OSU listing \$8,025,356 in pay and benefits for its nine assistants.

This total includes wages, some bonuses, allowances, speaking fees, retirement stipends, club memberships, media income, tuition reimbursement and deferred compensation. Bonuses tied to bowl games are not included.

Penn State didn't publicly release a figure for assistant pay and benefits. Northwestern, a private school, does not release its report.

Among the 12 schools releasing their reports, closest to OSU for assistant football pay and benefits were Michigan at \$6.4 million, Iowa at \$5.4 million and Minnesota at \$5.3 million.

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Women's Hoops Exit A Downer Amid Impressive Run

Many in Buckeye Nation lamented that March 16-19 was a dark weekend for Ohio State sports, as many of the school's marquee sports stumbled. I was not as despondent as many.

Among the teams that suffered defeats were the men's basketball team, which was eliminated from the NCAA Tournament by Gonzaga on March 17. As I mentioned in this space last issue, the men had already surpassed all expectations for the season, even picking up an NCAA victory before showing a tremendous amount of grit before falling to a solid Bulldog team in Boise, Idaho. I felt no despair there.

The men's hockey team lost to Notre Dame in overtime in the Big Ten final on March 17. Still, the skating Buckeyes took one of the best teams in the country to overtime before finally falling and had the added bonus of defeating rival Michigan to even make it to the final. Any pain from the loss to the Irish was quickly alleviated by the team earning a No. 1 seed in the NCAA tournament, and the Buckeyes ultimately advanced to only their second Frozen Four in school history.

The team's women's counterpart had also advanced to the Frozen Four that weekend and was eliminated in the semis by Clarkson on March 16. The fact that the Buckeye women made it that far was impressive and a testament to the job that coach Nadine Muzerall has done.

She took over a program in disarray before the 2016-17 season and had her team reach unprecedented heights this year, not only making it to the Frozen Four but setting a school record for wins (24) and Western Collegiate Hockey Association wins (14) as well. No real disappointment here. Hey, Gene Smith, give this lady a raise!

Many pointed to the Ohio State wrestling team finishing second at nationals in Cleveland March 15-17 as one of the low points of the weekend. There is no question Ohio State had the potential to win it all this season. The Buckeyes had already won the Big Ten championship, which would have made them one of the favorites to win the national crown, given that wrestling power rests in the conference (four of the ultimate top five teams at the tourney were from the Big Ten) and the Buckeyes had 10 wrestlers advance to Cleveland.

While finishing runner-up to Penn State was disappointing, I would hardly consider it devastating. After all, the Nittany Lions have now won three titles in a row and seven in the past eight years – Ohio State is the only school to interrupt that streak, winning it all in 2015 – so it's not like the Buckeyes, who amassed a school-record 134.5 points to PSU's 141.5 – were involved in a stunning upset, and they proved their prowess by finishing well ahead of another power, Iowa, that tallied just 97 points in third.

But in what *would* have to be considered a stunning upset, the OSU women's basketball team was thrashed by Central Michigan, 95-78, in the second round of the NCAA tournament on March 19 – in St. John Arena, no less.

This is one I can't explain away and is a major disappointment, especially given the fact that the Final Four was contested in Columbus this year. Sure it would have been a fairy-tale ending to the season for the Buckeyes to make it to the pinnacle of their sport on their home turf. Yet it was not unrealistic to think that Ohio State would at least make a run toward Nationwide Arena.

This was a team that was built to peak this year, with senior Kelsey Mitchell, the nation's second all-time leading career scorer,

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

joined by an outstanding senior supporting cast that included Stephanie Mavunga, who averaged a double-double for the season (16.6 points, 11.0 rebounds). The team roared into the Big Dance with Big Ten regular-season and tournament titles under its belt, so the Buckeyes weren't by any means a Cinderella team in pursuit of that fairy-tale trip to downtown Columbus.

There were tell-tale signs during the course of the season that, even with all that talent, this might not be Ohio State's year.

There was a troubling three-game losing streak in January, when the Buckeyes lost to conference foes Michigan, Maryland and Iowa – admittedly all ranked – by an average of almost 18 points a game. The team bounced back for four conference wins before a disastrous nonleague trip to No. 22 South Florida, where the Buckeyes fell 84-65.

But it was seven straight wins from there, capped by a 79-69 win over No. 17 Maryland to win the Big Ten tournament, followed by a convincing 87-45 win over George Washington at St. John to open March Madness.

It quickly went south, as Central Michigan sent the host Buckeyes packing with a resounding 95-78 upset.

My roots are in the MAC – Bowling Green SID Bob Moyers gave me my first sportswriting job in the fall of 1977 – so I don't like to disrespect teams from that conference. But anytime a MAC team beats a Big Ten team it looks bad, especially when you consider that the Chips were a No. 11 seed to the No. 3 seed for the Big Ten champs.

For the sake of full disclosure, I did not see the game, as we were putting the finishing touches to the March 24 issue of BSB. But I can read a box score and I could see that CMU was 7 of 8 from three-point land in the pivotal third quarter and 14 of 27 from beyond the arc for the game. Teams get hot, but when a club hits nearly 52 percent from long range, there are probably some defensive issues by the opponent as well. The Chippewas also stood up to the hostile St. John Arena environment by making 25 of 27 shots from the foul line, so let's give them credit where credit was due.

They deserved the victory.

But the loss by Ohio State continued a disturbing trend. In its seven defeats this season, Ohio State gave up a staggering average of 89.9 points. Only in their 69-60 loss to then No. 14 Duke did OSU give up less than 84 points in defeat. All of the team's losses other than that to CMU came to ranked teams, but you can't be giving up that many points in big games.

In any sport, defense wins championships.

This porous play is something that Buckeye coach Kevin McGuff will have to look at as he heads into next year without seniors Mitchell, Mavunga, Linnae Harper, Asia Doss and Alexa Hart, who take 79.7 percent of the team's points and 75.7 of the player rebounds with them.

Maybe the women's team will surprise us next year, just as the men's team did this season. But there's no escaping the fact that, given Ohio State's returning veteran talent – and with the Final Four being in the Capital City – this season was a disappointment.

With the early exit, Ohio State continues

its streak of not making it past the Sweet 16 since 1993, the year the Buckeyes made their only trip to the Final Four. McGuff was coming off two straight trips to the Sweet 16 where his Buckeyes were eliminated by powers Tennessee in 2016 and Notre Dame – the recently crowned national champion – last year.

I couldn't help but notice in our From the Pages of BSB feature on page 2 of this issue that it was five years ago that Ohio State let McGuff's predecessor, Jim Foster, go despite at one point leading his team to six straight Big Ten regular-season championships in the midst of his 11 seasons in Columbus. However, he had only three Sweet 16s to show for it.

"We evaluate the program every year," then-associate athletic director Mieschelle Willis said at the time of Foster's termination. "We strive to be nationally competitive and believe we have everything in place here to be nationally competitive. We believe that means we should be deep into the postseason, so that's what went into the decision."

Willis is gone, since retired, but athletic director Smith and the expectations remain.

Who Are The Greats?

I had an interesting discussion with BSB managing editor emeritus Mark Rea a few days back (congratulations on your new grandson, Mark). Mark was taken aback by the legendary status that in our last issue fellow BSB columnist Mike Wachsmann heaped on Ohio State's wrestling great Kyle Snyder, who capped his Buckeye career with his third national championship on March 17. With Mark and Mike having now worked together for 30 years, I can assure you that it is not the first time that the two have disagreed.

This led to Mark and me getting into a discussion about the greatest Ohio State athletes of all time and how sometimes we rank great Buckeyes not on what they did during their time in Columbus, but what they did at Ohio State as well as what they did beyond.

Among the big names in OSU history whose status has been enhanced by their post-Buckeye days is Jack Nicklaus, who won a pair of U.S. Amateurs and an NCAA championship in 1961 while at Ohio State but established himself as perhaps the greatest golfer of all time while a pro. John Havlicek, a Buckeye basketball great no doubt, helped Ohio State to three Final Four appearances in his three years, including the school's only national championship in 1960, but really cemented his status as an all-time great during his legendary career with the NBA's Boston Celtics.

I think Mark and I ultimately agreed that Jesse Owens was the greatest athlete in Ohio State history. Interestingly, however, Owens' historic – in so many ways – performance at the 1936 Munich Olympics, when he won four gold medals to help dispel Adolph Hitler's notion of Aryan supremacy, occurred *after* his Ohio State career. However, Owens' performance at the 1935 Big Ten track championships in Ann Arbor, Mich., when he tied or set four world records in a span of roughly 45 minutes, had already cemented his legendary OSU status.

Mark tossed out the name of basketball Buckeye Jerry Lucas as one of the greats, and

I mentioned that I thought that if you count college, Olympic and pro performances, that Katie Smith had a comparable record to that of Lucas. Mark pooh-poohed that notion for reasons I don't recall. As I think about it, Smith is, indeed, one of the all-time greats, as her election to various halls of fame recently clearly indicates.

But if one looks at the record of Lucas – who had an outstanding pro career that included an NBA championship and being named to the league's All-50th Anniversary team and also an Olympic Gold medal – solely based on his time at Ohio State, he has to be right up there with Owens. In the same allotted three seasons as Havlicek, Lucas not only played on the national championship team but was named Big Ten Player of the Year all three seasons and national Player of the Year twice. You can't get much better than that.

Smith had an outstanding career at Ohio State, though not quite up to Lucas' level. She led the Buckeyes to their only Final Four appearance, leaving Ohio State as the Big Ten's all-time leading scorer, and was named the conference's Player of the Year as a senior in 1996. She went on to a lengthy pro career that increased her status, being named one of the WNBA's top 15 players of the league's first 15 years in 2011 and a Top 20@20 in 2016. She also won three Olympic Gold medals.

But to go back to Snyder, one of the things that puts him among the elite Buckeyes, in my mind, is the fact that he has already had success outside his college career before leaving Columbus, as witnessed by his becoming both the youngest Olympic and World champion in U.S. wrestling history while still wrestling for the Buckeyes. To me, with so much in front of him, the jury is still out on where he will ultimately end up in OSU annals.

All of which led me to take a look back at Buckeye Sports Bulletin's 1999 poll to determine the 50 greatest Ohio State athletes of the 20th century. BSB reached out to readers, OSU coaches and administrators, and area media members to compile our list.

The top 10, in order, were Owens, Nicklaus, Lucas, Archie Griffin, Havlicek, Chic Harley, Jim Parker, Chris Spielman, Vic Janowicz and Eddie George. Smith was the highest rated woman at 15th. I suspect she would rank higher in a poll of Buckeye greats today. Track's Stephanie Hightower was the next highest woman at 33.

It's hard to believe that was 18 years ago. I wonder which Buckeye athletes would be added to that list today.

Troy Smith, with his Heisman Trophy, would probably make the list. Other Buckeye Heisman winners besides Griffin, Janowicz and George back at the end of the century included Howard "Hopalong" Cassady at No. 20 and Les Horvath at 25. What about Ezekiel Elliott, Joey (or eventually Nick) Bosa, James Laurinaitis or Malcolm Jenkins? Evan Turner would get a look among basketball players.

Women's basketball players who would get attention might include Jessica Davenport and Jantel Lavender, as well as Mitchell. Snyder and four-time NCAA champion Logan Stieber would certainly merit consideration from the wrestling team. How about baseball's Nick Swisher?

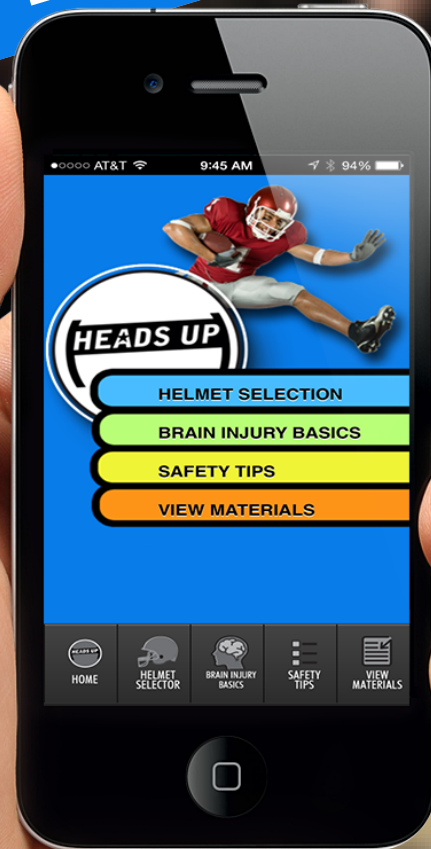
These are 21st century Buckeye athletes who quickly come to mind for me. What do you think?

I will make sure to run the complete list of the 50 greatest Buckeyes of the 20th century, along with the accompanying story, in an upcoming issue of the electronic BSB Quickly.



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