

BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 38, No. 24

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

August 2019

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**BSB'S 2019
FOOTBALL
PREVIEW**

ANDREW LIND

MAN IN CHARGE – First-year head coach Ryan Day hopes to put his own stamp on the Ohio State football program while following the blueprint laid out by former head coach Urban Meyer, who retired at the end of the 2018 season.

Expectations Remain High For Ohio State And First-Year Head Coach Ryan Day

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It goes without saying that first-year Ohio State head coach Ryan Day has some rather large shoes to fill.

His predecessor, Urban Meyer, went 83-9 overall and 54-4 in Big Ten play during his seven seasons in Columbus. He also won the inaugural College Football Playoff national championship, led the Buckeyes to three conference titles and ended his career with the third-highest winning percentage in college football history.

But when reminded of those lofty numbers and the expectations that come with being the head man at a prestigious program such as Ohio State during Big Ten Media Days in July, the 40-year-old Day simply grinned and took a sip of his iced coffee.

"I know exactly what you're saying, trust me," Day said. "When you start to think of it that way, you get overwhelmed in a hurry and you start to focus on things that really don't matter."

"The expectations are so high here that if you don't win them all, the minute you lose a game, you can't just come crumbling and fall apart. It's

one of those things you have to think about and have a plan for."

That's easier said than done, though. And Day – who filled in admirably for Meyer last season while he served a three-game suspension for his mismanagement of former wide receivers coach Zach Smith – understands that all too well.

"There will be adversity along the way," Day said. "I don't know what it's going to be, but if you think back on the last few years at Ohio State or any program, there's adversity that hits and there's a journey that starts that you never thought would happen. There are obstacles and challenges and things that come in the way, but building the relationships and building some of the expectations on the front end helps you deal with them so it doesn't all just come caving in."

Day's first order of business when he took over the program in January was to revamp the coaching staff responsible for the worst defensive output in school history. He cleared out everyone on that side of the ball outside of defensive line coach Larry Johnson and replaced them with Greg Mattison, Al Washington, Jeff Hafley and Matt Barnes.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Keeping Perspective

The 2019 Ohio State football season is classified as "It's all new." Fans will have to face reality and new facts as the season develops because every season has its share of things to cheer about and reasons to be disappointed. Any football season is like life, it develops as we approach reality and face the facts. Yes, we Buckeye fans might be prejudice, but we've experienced the times to cheer and suffered through disappointments, too. Let us support the new football season with a positive attitude and watch it unfold under new coaches, a new team with new players, a new schedule and new opportunities for cheering and discussing how it unfolds. Please remember it is entertainment and the joy of living toward being a Buckeye fan whenever a season ends. It will be full of great surprise, filled with memories and many Monday morning quarterback discussions.

Nelson Bell
Toledo

If you would like to express an opinion concerning Ohio State University sports, please send your letter to BSB Letters, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, OH 43212, or email it to bsb@buckeyesports.com. Letters must be signed and include the writer's hometown and a daytime telephone number for verification. Publication priority will be given to those letters that are brief, and we reserve the right to edit letters for publication.



From The Message Board

Buckeye Sports Bulletin asked our thoughtful Ohio State fans on BuckeyeSports.com what their expectations were for Ryan Day's first season at the helm of the Buckeyes. Here are some of the responses:

"I think we go 11-1 and make the playoff. Think we outmatch a lot of teams in the B1G with our depth."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"I say 12-0 is more likely than the 10-3, which is implied by the over/under 9.5 wins set by Vegas. Meyer never won fewer than 11. I also think our top 44 (two deep) are not inferior to anybody's 44."

– Terrier Buck

"11-1 with a playoff spot sounds very possible. I also believe the overall talent level and depth the Buckeyes have is superior to all other B1G schools, but it's very difficult to go undefeated ... If Fields has to miss an extended amount of time for injury, it could very well be disastrous."

– Brent A. Greathouse

"Expectations are high. 11-1 with the loss coming at home to Michigan State. I feel their defense will be very good. They will have to score but so will we. We do not play the Spartans well. Hope I'm wrong."

– John Lanning

"Predictions at this point are pretty much a stab in the dark, at least for me. We may have some ideas about our starters but many of our depth players are not so well known, at least to me. So what the heck, I'll say 12-0!"

– PeyoteBuck

"Every year I think we will go undefeated – so why should this year be different? I cannot think of one game which we will not be the favorite on the betting lines."

– mrbigbox

From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago – 1984

When Cris Carter was recruited by Ohio State, it was reported that he would come to Columbus because he had been assured by coach Earle Bruce and his staff that he was being recruited to play wide receiver on offense.

Interestingly, in the annual North-South All-Star game played in Massillon, Ohio, Carter caught just one pass for six yards. On the other side of the line of scrimmage, the 6-3, 184-pounder, who had set a Middletown record with 10 interceptions the previous season during his only full year on defense, broke up several passes and showed he was also able to hit hard.

However, the brother of NBA veteran Butch Carter still insisted his future was on offense.

"They have two graduating receivers, but they have a handful of defensive backs returning – younger guys," Carter said of the Buckeyes. "Plus, I like to play offense better."

30 Years Ago – 1989

After sitting out his freshman season due to Proposition 48, Ohio State sophomore defensive back Buster Howe had learned a lesson about himself and life in general.

"You don't get everything you want out of life all the time," Howe said. "Some people, because of their background or past, think they can get anything they ask for. Life doesn't work that way."

25 Years Ago – 1994

It is hard to imagine any young college football player would not want to add his name to the list of Heisman Trophy winners, but Buckeye wide receiver Joey Galloway wasn't making it a priority.

"I'm very honored to be mentioned as a possible Heisman candidate. Let me be real clear on that point," Galloway said. "But as far as something to shoot for, I don't think of it that way. I really don't think it's something you can set a goal to achieve. It's pretty much out of your hands."

"All of the talk, all of the preseason hype about who's going to win the Heisman Trophy, is kind of ridiculous when you sit back and really look at it. It's kind of like trying to sit back and predict who the national champion is going to be. I mean, you have a pretty good idea, but you never know."

"All of (the speculation) is based upon what you did last year. If that's the case, there's no reason to play the season. Just give the title to Florida State and the trophy to Charlie Ward again."

20 Years Ago – 1999

OSU basketball standouts Michael Redd and Scoonie Penn helped the United States to a gold medal in the World University Games with a 79-65 win over Yugoslavia, the sixth straight championship for the U.S.

The Americans swept through the competition, held in Palma de Mallorca, Spain, extending their win streak to a record 40 games. Redd missed the first game due to illness but teamed up with Penn as a starter in the backcourt thereafter until Penn became ill.

"I think I played pretty well over there," Penn said. "I didn't score a lot of points, but we had a team where everybody just did their little role."

Both players said the overseas food did not agree with them.

"That was the worst part," Redd said. "We ended up at McDonald's just about every day."

15 Years Ago – 2004

Brian Hartline, a receiver entering his senior season at Canton (Ohio) GlenOak High School, the same school that had produced Dustin Fox, attended OSU's senior advanced camp.

Fox spent some time with Hartline that weekend, and Hartline had the opportunity to go one-on-one with Fox, considered a candidate for postseason honors at cornerback for the Buckeyes. "Dustin's an amazing athlete, and when I was able to go up against him – and in all fairness, I think I did pretty decent – he reassured me how I could play at Ohio State," Hartline said.

The vote of confidence went a long way.

"I know for a fact that (Dustin is) going to be playing at the next level if he just stays healthy," Hartline said. "And for him to say, 'You impressed the heck out of me,' and then talk to the coaches and tell them that (I'm) a good athlete, that meant more than anything to me. It reassured me, too, that this is the place for me."

10 Years Ago – 2009

Terrelle Pryor's attachment to Ohio State was running skin deep.

The native of Jeanette, Pa., chose the Buckeyes over in-state power Penn State and rival Michigan in a recruiting process that extended well past National Signing Day 2008, but any concerns about the sophomore quarterback's devotion to his team could be allayed by a glance at his throwing arm.

Emblazoned there was a tattoo devoted to the Buckeyes featuring buckeye leaves, buckeyes and a prominent, scarlet "Block O" on his forearm that drew the most attention.

Pryor said he got the tattoo to symbolize his devotion to his teammates.

"These guys right here are my brothers," the QB said. "I'd die for them, and I play for them. There's nothing like being a team and being with these types of players. They're hungry. (I'm) sweating with them and bleeding with them. This is where I live now. This is my home. It's in my blood now. I love Ohio State football – scarlet and gray."

Five Years Ago – 2014

Cardale Jones' Ohio State career almost ended before it began with his famous tweet a few games into Urban Meyer's tenure in which he said classes were pointless and that he didn't attend Ohio State to "play school."

But with a steady hand from the coaching staff, Jones was able to mature into both a viable option for time at quarterback and someone who could represent the program in a positive light.

"It's been more hard on the coaches than for me because they stuck with me and they believed in me and they kept pushing me," Jones said. "They've basically stuck with me, and they kept riding me every day."

Added Meyer, "He was a guy that couldn't get out of his own way. You're starting to see the progress in the classroom. You remember the famous tweet? It's a different guy."

One Year Ago – 2018

After serving as the deputy in 2017, Dwayne Haskins had the offseason to prepare for his new role, and his attention shifted.

"In the weight room, on the field, he's just a different dude," fifth-year senior receiver Parris Campbell said of Haskins at Big Ten Media Days in July. "You can see it in his work. He was kind of a guy – joked around a little bit, had funny times in the locker room – you don't see that as often anymore."

"And like I said, when we're in the weight room, you can really tell that he's working hard, giving it all. He's coming out of his shell, trying to be that leader that we need him to be."

Focus Should Be Ohio State's First Priority

What Might Have Been

Remember the 10-point loss to Michigan State in the 2013 Big Ten Championship Game and subsequent 40-35 defeat at the hands of Clemson in the 2014 Orange Bowl?

Meyer and then-offensive coordinator Tom Herman virtually eliminated running back Carlos Hyde from their late-game strategies in those two games. Hyde finished the 2013 regular season by rushing for 226 yards at

in 1969, 1970, 1973 and 1975, while Earle Bruce came within one point of winning the title in 1979. John Cooper saw his best title chances evaporate with home losses to lesser-talented teams – No. 21 Michigan in 1996 and unranked Michigan State in 1998 – and Jim Tressel had two more shots at glory, but his No. 1-ranked teams couldn't get it done in back-to-back national championship game appearances against Florida in 2006 and LSU in 2007.

Woody, Earle, Coop, Tress and Meyer combined to win a boatload of games at Ohio State – 586 of them to be exact. Name another program whose most recent five head coaches are already or soon-to-be members of the College Football Hall of Fame. Don't strain your brain because there isn't one.

The bottom line is this. Ohio State can bestow a captainship on every player on the roster if it so chooses. It matters not to me how long it took to officially name Justin Fields the starting quarterback. I don't give a whit about a 40-year-old, first-year head coach hiring a 69-year-old assistant who has spent a large chunk of the last three decades trying his level best to figure out a way to beat Ohio State.

The only thing I care about is how Ryan Day is going to channel his seemingly boundless energy and get his players to focus on every single opponent.

I have not coached a single football game in my life, but I would contend that I have watched more college football games during the past 40-some years than many coaches, so I feel I can offer Day at least a small piece of advice.

Former head coach Lou Holtz, who built a lot of his reputation on the 1968 season he spent as an assistant on Hayes' staff at Ohio State, once said, "To win a national championship, you don't have to be the best team in the country every Saturday. To win a national championship, you just have to be the best team in the stadium every Saturday."

If Day can somehow follow that advice, he should have no problems whatsoever in Columbus.

Opening With Success

The nonstop pressure of being head coach of the Buckeyes notwithstanding, Day has a little added incentive in the Aug. 31 opener against Florida Atlantic. No one has lost his first game as Ohio State head coach since 1892 – and even that is up for debate.

Oberlin spoiled Jack Ryder's debut as Ohio State head coach with a 40-0 victory against the Buckeyes in the 1892 season opener. The Yeomen (known in those days as the "O" Men) were also breaking in a new head coach that season – a 23-year-old Cleveland native by the name of John Heisman.

Technically, that game was not Ryder's first taste of coaching the Buckeyes. He had led the team for the final three games (all losses) of the program's inaugural season in 1890 but was not considered the team's head coach.

That was a distinction afforded to Lilley, who was instrumental during the latter part of the 19th century in getting the Ohio State administration to officially sanction a university football team.

The Buckeyes played their first game of intercollegiate football on May 3, 1890, traveling the short distance north to Ohio Wesleyan to win a 20-14 decision in front of a crowd of about 700.

And even then, there was some conjecture whether Lilley was in charge of things that morning – kickoff was at 9:30 a.m. – or whether the actual "coaching" of the team was left to co-captains Jesse Jones and Paul Lincoln.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Michigan, the most by any opposing running back in Michigan Stadium history, and then with the Big Ten championship and a trip to the national title game on the line, Hyde got only two carries in the fourth quarter against the Spartans. In the Orange Bowl, again with the outcome very much in doubt, Hyde's number was called once in the final period.

All that year, the safest bet for the Ohio State offense was handing the ball to Hyde, yet when it came to crunch time in the two most important games of the season, Meyer and Herman somehow decided they had better options.

There was the 35-21 loss to Virginia Tech early in the 2014 season, the first time the Buckeyes had lost a home opener in 36 years. There was the 17-14 loss to Michigan State in the 2015 home finale, a game in which the Spartans were without starting quarterback Connor Cook and won anyway because the supposedly unstoppable OSU offense accounted for just 132 total yards, the fewest in a game since gaining only 82 during the 41-14 loss to Florida in the 2006 BCS National Championship Game.

And let's not forget the 24-21 loss at Penn State in 2016, a game during which the Buckeyes blew a 21-7 lead early in the fourth quarter to a team that was a three-touchdown underdog.

Then came the string of inexplicable blow-outs. Ohio State lost a 31-0 decision to Clemson in the 2016 Fiesta Bowl, the program's first shutout loss since a 28-0 loss to Michigan on Nov. 20, 1993, a span of more than 23 years and 295 games. It was also the most lopsided shutout defeat for the Buckeyes since a 32-0 loss to USC on Oct. 11, 1947, a stretch spanning more than 59 years and 782 games. The only other time the Buckeyes have been shut out in a bowl game came 95 years earlier in a 28-0 loss to California in the 1921 Rose Bowl.

There was the 31-16 defeat against flag-planting Baker Mayfield and Oklahoma in 2017, making Meyer only the third Ohio State head coach ever to lose as many as two home openers during his career. The other two were Woody Hayes, who lost three home openers spread out over 28 seasons, and Alexander Lilley, the first head coach in program history who lost both of his home openers in 1890 and 1891.

And those were followed by the most epic of epic failures – the 55-24 defeat at unranked Iowa in 2017 and last year's 49-20 loss at unranked Purdue, a team that finished with a 6-7 record.

Meyer wasn't the first Ohio State head coach to preside during an era of nearly unbridled success punctuated by stinging losses that prevented the Buckeyes from propelling themselves into the stratosphere of college football.

Hayes could have and probably should have won undisputed national championships

Upon the establishment of the U.S. Constitution in 1789, Benjamin Franklin was said to have uttered these words: "In this world, nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes."

While he might have been an expert on such things as diplomacy, almanacs and flying kites in electrical storms, Old Ben didn't know anything about college football. Because if we have learned anything about the sport since the College Football Playoff system began in 2014, it is the certainty that Alabama and Clemson will make up half of the four-team tournament come December.

The Crimson Tide have been part of the playoff in each of the five seasons it has been staged, and with Heisman Trophy runner-up Tua Tagovailoa returning at quarterback as well as a favorable 2019 schedule that includes getting SEC rival and preseason No. 6-ranked LSU at home in early November, Alabama should have little trouble making it six playoff appearances in a row.

Likewise, Clemson seems a lock to march into the postseason with a loaded roster and a schedule that features teams that combined for a 79-71 record last year – and that is propped up by defending Southern Conference co-champion Wofford, a Football Championship Subdivision team that went 9-4 in 2018. Since 2015, when the Tigers last beat up on Wofford by a 49-10 final, Clemson has played an FCS opponent each season and has won by an average score of 54-5.

Another certainty – albeit an unfortunate one – that has accompanied the College Football Playoff in recent years is that Ohio State will stub its own toe so severely during the regular season that the Buckeyes will be left out of the playoff picture despite being one of the most talent-laden teams in the country.

And therein lies the single-most ardent task for first-year head coach Ryan Day: learning on the fly how to run your own program, managing your time in terms of job vs. family, and figuring out which hands of prominent boosters need immediate shaking and which ones can wait while grooming a new starting quarterback, agonizing over how to revamp a defense that could have at times been described last season as downright embarrassing, and following a coach who is a shoo-in for election to the College Football Hall of Fame. As if all of that were not enough, Day has to figure some way to keep his team laser-focused on each and every Saturday (or Friday night, as the case may be) during the regular season.

It was perhaps the only on-the-field failure of his predecessor. For all of the success enjoyed during the seven years of the Urban Meyer era, the one thing Meyer seemingly could not accomplish was keeping his team's mind on the business at hand.

Meyer enjoyed almost unprecedented success with the Buckeyes. His official record of 83-9 produced a .902 winning percentage that is the best among all permanent head coaches in the 129-year history of the program. His accomplishments included an undefeated season in 2012, a national championship in 2014, a division title in each of his seven seasons, and an unblemished 7-0 record against Michigan.

Yet with all of those victories and championships, there remain the head-scratching, mind-numbing, borderline-unbelievable performances that stick out like stinkweed in a rose garden. I'm not talking about mere disappointments that occurred because the breaks just didn't go the way of the Buckeyes. I'm talking about failures. Colossal blunders. Unfathomable catastrophes.



Vol. 38, No. 24
August 2019
www.BuckeyeSports.com

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

Columbus Sports Publications
1350 W. Fifth Ave., Suite 30
P.O. Box 12453
Columbus, Ohio 43212
(614) 486-2202
bsb@buckeyesports.com

Periodical class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Buckeye Sports Bulletin, P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio 43212. Subscription rates: \$99.95/year.

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2018-19 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (VOL. 38)

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The next issue (September cover date) will be mailed on Sept. 3.

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



Charter Member



Ohio State 5th In AP, Coaches Poll

The Ohio State football team will begin the 2019 season ranked fifth in both the Associated Press and Amway Coaches preseason polls. The polls were released Aug. 1 and 19, respectively.

Although they did not receive a first-place vote in either poll, the Buckeyes are once again projected to be the best team in the Big Ten. They're joined in the top 25 by conference foes Michigan (7 AP/7 Coaches), Penn State (14/15), Wisconsin (17/19), Iowa (19/20), Michigan State (20/18) and Northwestern (25/NR).

Defending national champion Clemson was the top vote-getter in both polls. The Tigers are followed by Alabama, Georgia and Oklahoma in each.

OSU Releases Emails, Texts From Zach Smith Investigation

Ohio State released more than 2,000 pages of emails and text messages related to the internal investigation into former head coach Urban Meyer and former wide receivers coach Zach Smith on Aug. 2, exactly one year after the university formed an independent working group to conduct said investigation. It was also coincidentally the same day the Buckeyes opened fall camp.

Many of the documents were heavily redacted in accordance with FERPA, HIPAA and attorney-client privilege rules, and what remained did not reveal much other than what was previously disseminated.

Text messages showed that Meyer raised concerns about Smith's job performance, specifically his wide receivers' routes after a 31-16 loss to Oklahoma in September 2017. Meyer then checked with director of player personnel Mark Pantoni in December 2017 to make sure Smith was working hard on the recruiting trail.

Smith was also absent from a meeting where the coaching staff was preparing for the Cotton Bowl against USC. "(We) need to make (sure) his guys play well," Meyer said in a text to an unknown recipient.

Other notable takeaways include a text message sent to Meyer from his wife, Shelley, who voiced her concern over Smith's drinking and his potential negative reaction to his firing; a group message between Meyer, Smith, Pantoni, then-offensive coordinator Ryan Day and assistant director of player personnel Weston Zernechel as they looked to secure a commitment from wide receiver Garrett Wilson; and a text message from Meyer to Smith refusing to offer a recruit an impermissible benefit.

More details from the released documents can be found on the BuckeyeSports.com website.

Alabama Among Schools That Tried To Poach OSU Assistants

According to the aforementioned documents, some of the nation's top college football programs and NFL teams attempted to hire several Ohio State assistant coaches following the 2017 season.

In a text message to university president Michael Drake, Meyer claimed that former defensive coordinator Greg Schiano had been offered jobs at Alabama, Texas A&M and Florida State as well as three jobs in the NFL; Smith was offered a job at Alabama; Day was offered assistant coaching jobs at UCLA and with the Tennessee Titans, as well as the head coaching position at Mississippi State; former assistant defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs was offered a job with Alabama and the Titans; while co-defensive coordinator/safeties coach Alex Grinch was offered jobs at Alabama, UCLA and Mississippi State.

"Thank you for all your support with my coaching staff," Meyer texted Drake. "The current market and aggressiveness of the business has never been like this."

Meyer noted all of the offers would pay more than the coaches' salary at Ohio State, but other than Coombs – who accepted the job with Tennessee – they remained because they "love Ohio State."

Meyer also sent a text message to a redacted recipient asking if he should leak the news that the Crimson Tide unsuccessfully attempted to poach several assistants in order to gain an advantage in recruiting.

Alabama head coach Nick Saban said on Aug. 3 that he interviewed Smith for a job but did not offer him the position after the Crimson Tide conducted a background check.

"We talk to a lot of coaches about a lot of things," Saban said. "I really never did offer this guy a job. We did interview him and he did a nice job in the interview, but it was when we did the background check that we decided that there was a better opportunity to hire somebody else, and that's what we did."

Buckeyes Self-Report Minor NCAA Violations

According to a public records request, the Ohio State football and basketball programs self-reported multiple violations to the NCAA between May 1, 2017, and May 22, 2019.

Most of the 22 self-reported incidents – 16 for football and six for basketball – were considered minor violations, and the athletic department handed out self-imposed punishments as a result. But in four other instances, the NCAA determined it needed to alter and/or increase the punishments handed down by the athletic department.

One of the most notable incidents included the Ohio State football program agreeing to stop recruiting current Penn State linebacker Micah Parsons after he took pictures on the set of ESPN's "College Gameday" and met with the analysts, which included former Buckeye quarterback Kirk Herbstreit and 1995 Heisman Trophy-winning running back Eddie George.

The football team also went over the allotted number of scholarships in spring 2017 because the compliance department told the coaches three players could split two scholarships. This led to the program receiving a one-scholarship reduction at the "next available opportunity," though it's unclear if that has already occurred.

Other violations include impermissible text messages, phone calls and tweets; preferential treatment; an assistant coach recruiting before passing a required

OSU 5th In BSB Consensus Poll

Alabama and Clemson have split the last four College Football Playoff national championships, so it's no surprise to see the Crimson Tide and Tigers are considered the favorites in this year's title chase.

So who will join them in the College Football Playoff semifinals? That varies depending on which outlet you check, but most usually pick two teams among Georgia, Ohio State and Oklahoma – all of which have made it to the CFP in the past.

Schools such as LSU, Michigan and Utah appear to be knocking on the door as well and have been trendy picks to break through this year. But not every outlet is convinced that will happen, hence the Utes' middle-of-the-pack ranking in BSB's preseason consensus poll.

Rankings in the consensus poll include the AP Top 25 and the Amway Coaches Poll, as well as those published by Athlon Sports, CBS Sports, ESPN, Lindy's, Phil Steele, Pix Six Previews, Pro Football Focus, Sports Illustrated and The Sporting News.

A team earns 25 points for each first-place vote, 24 points for a second-place vote and so on, while the total number of first-place votes are in parentheses.

| Team | Points |
|----------------------|------------|
| 1. Clemson (7) | 271 |
| 2. Alabama (4) | 265 |
| 3. Georgia | 251 |
| 4. Oklahoma | 230 |
| 5. Ohio State | 229 |
| 6. LSU | 215 |
| 7. Michigan | 199 |
| 8. Florida | 195 |
| 9. Notre Dame | 185 |
| 10. Texas | 184 |
| 11. Texas A&M | 147 |
| 12. Washington | 145 |
| 13. Utah | 141 |
| 14. Oregon | 139 |
| 15. Auburn | 111 |
| 16. Penn State | 106 |
| 17. Iowa | 71 |
| 18. Michigan State | 67 |
| 19. UCF | 60 |
| 20. Wisconsin | 57 |
| 21. Iowa State | 47 |
| 22. Syracuse | 42 |
| 23. Nebraska | 41 |
| 24. Stanford | 28 |
| 25. Miami | 28 |

Others receiving votes: Mississippi State, TCU, Missouri, Washington State, Army, Virginia, Kentucky, Virginia Tech, Northwestern, Oklahoma State, Boise State, Tennessee and South Carolina.

– Compiled by Andrew Lind

2019 Ohio State Football Schedule

| Date | Opponent | Result/Time (ET) | TV | 2018 Record |
|----------|------------------------|------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------|
| Aug. 31 | FLORIDA ATLANTIC | 12 p.m. | FOX | 5-7 (3-5 Conference USA) |
| Sept. 7 | CINCINNATI* | 12 p.m. | ABC | 11-2 (6-2 American Athletic Conference) |
| Sept. 14 | at Indiana | 12 p.m. | FOX | 5-7 (2-7 Big Ten) |
| Sept. 21 | MIAMI (OHIO)* | TBA | TBA | 6-6 (6-2 Mid-American) |
| Sept. 28 | at Nebraska | TBA | TBA | 4-8 (3-6 Big Ten) |
| Oct. 5 | MICHIGAN STATE* | 7:30 p.m. | ABC/ESPN | 7-6 (5-4 Big Ten) |
| Oct. 18 | at Northwestern* | 8:30 p.m. | FS1 | 9-5 (8-1 Big Ten) |
| Oct. 26 | WISCONSIN* | TBA | TBA | 8-5 (5-4 Big Ten) |
| Nov. 9 | MARYLAND | TBA | TBA | 5-7 (3-6 Big Ten) |
| Nov. 16 | at Rutgers | TBA | TBA | 1-11 (0-9 Big Ten) |
| Nov. 23 | PENN STATE* | TBA | TBA | 9-4 (6-3 Big Ten) |
| Nov. 30 | at Michigan* | 12 p.m. | FOX | 10-3 (8-1 Big Ten) |
| Dec. 7 | Big Ten Championship** | 8 p.m. | FOX | |

* 2018 bowl team

** at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)

exam; student-athlete reinstatement; promotion using student-athlete image; use of name, image or likeness; use of an outside consultant; missing a Big Ten tender filing deadline; and financial aid overage.

As a result of the impermissible phone calls noted above, Day and his new coaching staff were unable to speak with recruits from the class of 2020 between Feb. 6-18.

The Buckeyes' basketball program, meanwhile, self-reported past violations that included paying for a recruit's meal that exceeded the allotted amount of \$40 while he was on an official visit and ordering alcohol from a hotel bar for the family that exceeded the beverage policy amount of \$23.25.

Additional violations include free camp admission; recruiting inducement; impermissible booster group; and impermissible publicity and inducement.

Among those reported incidents, three basketball recruits walked onto the set of "College Gameday" and met with the ESPN personalities the same day as Parsons. Ohio State's self-imposed punishment included banning all athletic programs from the vicinity of the set for the remainder of the year and providing education to ESPN producers to avoid such instances in the future.

DE Tyreke Smith Cleared Following Offseason Surgery

Ohio State sophomore defensive end Tyreke Smith underwent surgery for an undisclosed injury back in June but announced on July 31 that he had been cleared to participate in fall camp.

Day, who previously said he will not discuss the specifics of player injuries, did not elaborate when asked about it in June. He did add that he expected Smith to be fine, however.

A four-star prospect from Cleveland Heights, Ohio, Smith recorded just nine tackles as a true freshman last fall. But his 3½-tackle, 1½-sack performance in the spring game back in April would suggest he'll have a bigger role in the defensive end rotation alongside starters Chase Young and Jonathon Cooper this fall.

Several Buckeyes Land On Preseason Award Watch Lists

Several members of the Ohio State football program were named to preseason watch lists this summer, signifying their status among college football's best players.

Junior running back J.K. Dobbins is up for several prestigious individual awards, including the Doak Walker Award (top running back) and Maxwell Award (best

22 Student-Athletes Receive Degrees

all-around player). He was also placed on the 10-member preseason All-Big Ten team.

Dobbins was joined on the Maxwell Award watch list by first-year starting quarterback Justin Fields.

Fifth-year senior wide receiver K.J. Hill – who is just 48 catches shy of becoming the Buckeyes' all-time leader in receptions – was named to the Biletnikoff Award watch list (most outstanding receiver).

Junior defensive end Chase Young is also up for a slew of individual awards, including the Bednarik Award and Nagurski Award – both of which are presented to the country's best defensive player. He joined Dobbins on the preseason All-Big Ten team, as well.

Senior safety Jordan Fuller also was named to the Nagurski Award watch list, as well as that of the Jim Thorpe Award (best defensive back).

Though senior Malik Harrison and junior Tuf Borland are battling this fall to hold onto their starting linebacker spots, both were named to the Butkus Award watch list (best linebacker).

Other Ohio State players named to preseason watch lists include junior tight end Luke Farrell (Mackey Award, best tight end); junior offensive lineman Thayer Munford (Outland Trophy, best lineman excluding defensive ends); and junior punter Drue Chrisman (Ray Guy, best punter).

Newcomers Shed Black Stripes During Fall Camp

A rite of passage that began under former head coach Urban Meyer has continued with Ryan Day at the helm as several Ohio State newcomers shed their black stripes during fall camp, signaling their status as a full-fledged member of the Buckeyes' football program.

Offensive guard Jonah Jackson – a graduate transfer from Rutgers – had his stripe removed on Aug. 6, just four practices into fall camp. He has since been joined by a host of freshmen, including center Harry Miller and wide receiver Jameson Williams on Aug. 8; offensive guard Ryan Jacoby and running back Marcus Crowley on Aug. 12; linebacker Cade Stover on Aug. 13; safety Bryson Shaw, defensive end Noah Potter and running back Steele Chambers on Aug. 15; and linebacker Craig Young on Aug. 19.

That means a total of 11 players from Ohio State's 2019 recruiting class have shed their black stripes since arriving on campus, as wide receiver Garrett Wilson and defensive end Zach Harrison did so during spring practices. They were just the third and fourth early enrollees, joining wide receiver Austin Mack in 2016 and defensive tackle Tommy Togiai in 2018, to have their stripes removed in spring camp since Meyer implemented the tradition upon his arrival in 2012.

Additionally, redshirt freshman walk-on quarterback Danny Vanatsky also had his black stripe removed on Aug. 19.

WiFi Installation Begins At Ohio Stadium, Schottenstein Center

Before the start of the 2017 season, Ohio State announced plans to install WiFi at Ohio Stadium and the Jerome Schottenstein Center, and it appears that project is finally nearing completion. Athletic director Gene Smith shared a photo on Twitter on July 23 of WiFi equipment being installed on the handrails in the stadium's south stands.

The \$18.6 million project – which also includes the installation of additional wireless access points around campus – is

Twenty-two current and former Ohio State student-athletes received their degrees during summer commencement at the Schottenstein Center on Aug. 4.

In all, 231 student-athletes graduated or received their master's degree from the university during the 2018-19 academic year.

The summer list was led by current Buckeye football player Damon Arnette and Reid Fragel, who played for the football Buckeyes from 2009-11 and was with several teams in the NFL.

Other current student-athletes who graduated include men's hockey forward Dakota Joshua, an NCAA All-Regional Team selection who recently signed an entry-level contract with the NHL's St. Louis Blues; Stephanie Thielemann, an All-America synchronized swimmer who was a key member of three straight national championships; and Mossimo Chavez, a first-team All-American in the 200-meter free relay.

Other notable summer graduates include Eric Brunner, a former men's soccer captain and first-team All-American

who led the Buckeyes to the 2007 NCAA championship game. He spent seven years in Major League Soccer with the New York Red Bulls, Columbus Crew, Portland Timbers and Houston Dynamo and was the first Ohio State soccer player to be chosen for the United States Men's National Team.

Marrita Porter, a two-time team captain and All-Big Ten selection for the women's basketball team in 1998-99, also finished her bachelor's degree through the university's degree completion program. She ranks in the top 20 in school history in scoring, rebounds, free throws made and field-goal percentage.

A complete list of Ohio State's 22 student-athlete graduates, as well as their majors, can be found below in alphabetical order by sport.

Baseball – Dustin Jourdan, sport industry.

Women's Basketball – Adreana Miller, kinesiology; Marrita Porter, sport industry; Najah Queenland, pharmacology.

Cheerleading – Maggie Reinhardt,

nutrition.

Football – A.J. Alexander, sport industry; Damon Arnette, communications; Malik Barrow, communications; Reid Fragel, communications; Reneard Hill, communications.

Men's Hockey – Dakota Joshua, sport industry.

Women's Lacrosse – McKayla Conti, sport industry; Gwendolyn Postalwait, hospitality management.

Men's Soccer – Eric Brunner, communications; Benjamin Fitzpatrick, sport industry.

Men's Swimming – Mossimo Chavez, sport industry; Austin Mortimer, economics.

Synchronized Swimming – Stephanie Thielemann, psychology.

Women's Tennis – Kelsey Dieters, pharmaceutical sciences.

Women's Track and Field – Claire Wiles, operations management.

Men's Volleyball – Blake Leeson, kinesiology; Aaron Samarin, kinesiology.

– Andrew Lind

expected to be completed by the Buckeyes' season opener against Florida Atlantic on Aug. 31.

The road to get to this point has been quite exhausting, however.

Ohio State signed a contract with Verizon Wireless in 2012 to bring WiFi to both the football stadium and basketball arena by fall 2015, but the installation did not occur. The university then sued the telecommunications company, but school officials have noted the lawsuit is still pending.

Another plan to bring WiFi to both venues by 2018 was discussed and ultimately shelved following an "unusually tense" board of trustees meeting in June 2017. The current project was then announced in April 2018 with hopes to "create a more seamless, efficient and modern end user experience."

Construction at the Schottenstein Center is expected to conclude in October, meanwhile, just in time for the start of the 2019-20 basketball season.

Buckeyes To Wear Black Uniforms Against Michigan State

Ohio State will wear its black alternate uniform for the homecoming game against Michigan State on Oct. 5.

The Buckeyes last wore their all-black uniforms – which feature the same striping pattern as the standard home-and-road set but with scarlet helmet stickers – during last season's 36-31 win over Nebraska. It has since become a favorite among recruits, who often take pictures in the uniform during official and unofficial visits.

Ohio State is 3-0 in its black alternate uniform and 21-5 overall in anything other than its standard home and road looks. The Buckeyes have worn at least one alternate every season since Nike introduced its Pro Combat System of Dress in 2009.

Kickoff for Ohio State's homecoming game against Michigan State is set for 7:30 p.m. It will be broadcast live on either ABC or ESPN.

Ohio State To Celebrate College Football's 150th Anniversary

As part of a year-long celebration of college football's 150th anniversary, Ohio State – and every other FBS and FCS school – will wear a special CFB150 uniform patch this season.

Continued On Page 6

Enjoy Daily Football Coverage Online

Ohio State football season is finally here and Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers can enjoy daily coverage of their beloved Buckeyes on BSB's BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all current print subscribers. The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff will be providing daily updates throughout the season, so there is no reason to wait between issues for the most current Buckeye news.

Don't miss news from Ryan Day's Tuesday press conferences or practice during the week. The BuckeyeSports.com website is available 24/7/365 with all the breaking news posted, including the latest in recruiting, and then discussed by readers and staff on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum. Subscribers can also read the entire print issue of BSB before it has even hit the post office.

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Continued From Page 5

The Buckeyes wore a similar patch in 1994 to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Nov. 6, 1869, game between Rutgers and Princeton. Not every team was required to do so that season, however.

The recommended location of the CFB150 patch is on the right chest of the uniform above the conference logo. Meanwhile, teams in Division II and III, as well as NAIA and junior college levels, will wear a helmet decal.

QB Matthew Baldwin Denied Immediate Eligibility At TCU

Former Ohio State quarterback Matthew Baldwin – who transferred to TCU following spring practice – was denied by the NCAA on Aug. 1 in his request for immediate eligibility, according to Drew Davison of the Fort Worth (Texas) Star-Telegram.

Baldwin, a former three-star prospect from Austin (Texas) Lake Travis, signed with the Buckeyes as part of their 2018 recruiting class but missed his entire freshman season as he recovered from a torn ACL he had suffered in the state championship game his senior year.

He battled Fields for the starting spot during spring camp but entered the transfer portal shortly after the spring game – citing a desire to move closer to home – and landed with the Horned Frogs just a few weeks later.

TCU is in the process of filing an

appeal on Baldwin's behalf. He's missed all of fall camp after having minor knee surgery and has fallen behind graduate transfer Alex Delton and true freshman Max Duggan in the race to be the Horned Frogs' starting quarterback this fall.

Baldwin's waiver denial is a stark contrast from that of Fields – who transferred from Georgia in January and was granted immediately eligibility – and former Buckeye quarterback Tate Martell, who is now at Miami. The NCAA updated its transfer waiver guidelines in June, and Baldwin's request reportedly fell under the updated guidelines.

WR L'Christian "Blue" Smith Eligible After Cincy Transfer

The NCAA on Aug. 7 granted former Ohio State wide receiver L'Christian "Blue" Smith immediate eligibility at Cincinnati, which means he's likely to see the field when the Bearcats come to Columbus this season.

"I'm happy for what Ohio State did for us and for Blue, really trying to help him out and make this possible," Fickell said of the Buckeyes' cooperating with Smith's request.

The 6-4, 220-pound Smith came to Ohio State as a four-star recruit from Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne but saw limited action as a true freshman last fall. He appeared in just three games (five total snaps) and did not catch a single pass with the Buckeyes.

Smith will be joined in Cincinnati's receiving corps by former Ohio State walk-on Garyn Prater, who also announced his transfer following spring practice. He is also eligible to play right away, as transfer restrictions do not apply to walk-on players who receive a scholarship elsewhere.

Maryland LB Keandre Jones Receives Waiver From NCAA

Former Ohio State linebacker Keandre Jones was also granted immediate eligibility following his transfer to Maryland. He, too, will be able to play against his former team when the Terrapins and Buckeyes meet on Nov. 9.

Jones – a native of Olney, Md. – was originally committed to the Terrapins

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"The Buckeye Sports Bulletin VIP program will help us hold the line on subscription rates as more and more of our readers find themselves on fixed incomes but still enjoy reading the print edition of BSB and struggle to meet the rising costs," BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz said. "Those who can afford to do so can help those who are less fortunate but share the same passion for Buckeye Sports Bulletin."

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but flipped to Ohio State late in the 2016 recruiting cycle. His friend, quarterback Dwayne Haskins, did the same thing that very day, citing the departure of then-interim head coach Mike Locksley, who has since returned to lead the Terrapins.

Jones spent three seasons at Ohio State and played in 33 games, recording 29 tackles and a key blocked punt in last season's 36-31 win over Nebraska.

Miami Does Not Name QB Tate Martell Starter

On Aug. 12, Miami (Fla.) head coach Manny Diaz named redshirt freshman Jarren Williams the team's starter. That means Martell will start his career with the Hurricanes as a backup.

"All three guys showed tremendous improvement and development, which is a credit to their hard work and the work of Dan Enos and his offensive staff," Diaz said in a press release, which also mentioned redshirt sophomore N'Kosi Perry. "We believe we can win with all three guys, however, we feel like Jarren has the greatest upside due to his passing ability, his instincts and his determination."

Williams has four years of eligibility remaining compared to Martell's three, which means another transfer is not out of the question for Martell, who was absent from practice the day of the announcement and was seen taking third-string snaps the following day.

DT Malik Barrow Transfers To UCF

After medically retiring from the Ohio State football program last fall, former defensive tackle Malik Barrow announced on July 31 that he will resume his collegiate career at UCF as a graduate transfer.

"With the distance to my house and my family, I just felt comfortable," said Barrow, a native of Tampa, Fla. "The coaching staff here, I feel like they believe in me and they gave me the opportunity to continue to play football."

Barrow has a long history of injuries dating back to his days at Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy, where he tore his ACL



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during his senior season. He appeared in just two games with the Buckeyes over three years, and a third torn ACL during spring practice in 2018 appeared to end his career.

Barrow was cleared by doctors outside the program this offseason, however, and began to explore his options. He graduated from Ohio State in early August, which means he'll have two seasons of eligibility remaining and can play for the Knights this fall.

"I'm feeling a lot better and I've been doing drills running and lifting and everything," Barrow said. "Now I'm just going to control what I can control, and that's what I'll do from now on, just take everything one step at a time."

TE A.J. Alexander To Continue College Career At Gardner-Webb

After playing last season at Division II Slippery Rock, former Ohio State tight end A.J. Alexander has transferred to Gardner-Webb, a Football Championship Subdivision program. The team confirmed his addition on Aug. 9.

A former three-star prospect from Burke (Va.) Lake Braddock, Alexander joined the Buckeyes in 2015. He played in 13 games (one start) as a redshirt freshman, catching four passes for 27 yards, but was placed on medical scholarship by the team after he missed the entire 2017 season with a torn ACL.

Alexander – who completed his degree from Ohio State this month – caught 11 passes for 89 yards and three touchdowns for The Rock last season. He has one season of eligibility remaining.

WR Michael Thomas Signs Record Contract Extension

Former Ohio State wide receiver Michael Thomas is now the highest-paid wide receiver in the NFL after agreeing to a five-year, \$100 million contract extension with the New Orleans Saints on July 31, which ended his six-day training camp holdout.

According to multiple reports, Thomas' new contract includes \$61 million in guaranteed money – the most ever for an offensive player who is not a quarterback. He is now the 22nd highest-paid player in the league.

A second-round pick out of Ohio State in 2016, Thomas has caught 321 passes – the most ever by a player in his first three seasons in the league – for 3,787 yards and 23 touchdowns. His 125 catches led the NFL last season, and his peers recently named him the 13th-best player in the league.

DE Nick Bosa To Miss Remainder Of Preseason

Former Ohio State defensive end Nick Bosa – the No. 2 overall pick in April's NFL draft – will miss the remainder of the preseason with a sprained ankle, San Francisco 49ers general manager John Lynch announced on Aug. 8. He suffered the injury during a pileup in practice.

"It's safe to say we won't see him in the preseason, and then we're going to be very prudent," Lynch said. "We'll get him right and he'll be a great player for a long time in this league."

Bosa played in just three games for Ohio State last season, recording 14 tackles, six tackles for loss, four sacks, one forced fumble and one fumble recovery for a touchdown. He injured a core muscle in the Buckeyes' win over TCU and missed the remainder of the season. It was believed he would return before the end of the season, but he opted to end his college career prematurely to focus on the NFL draft.

The goal is for Bosa to be available for the 49ers' regular-season opener against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Sept. 8.

DT Michael Bennett Suffers Broken Ankle In Preseason Camp

Former Ohio State defensive tackle Michael Bennett will be out indefinitely after he suffered a broken ankle on the first day of Atlanta Falcons training camp on July 22.

The 6-2, 288-pound Bennett had 110 tackles, 31½ tackles for a loss and 18 sacks during his four-year career in Columbus,

which culminated with a College Football Playoff national championship following the 2014 season. He was named a team captain as a senior that same season.

A sixth-round pick (180th overall selection) of the Jacksonville Jaguars in the 2015 NFL draft, Bennett played in 13 games as a rookie. He was placed on injured reserve after suffering a pectoral injury in 2017 and has played in just three games and recorded 11 tackles over the last three seasons.

Braxton Miller Returns To Ohio, Signs With Browns

The Cleveland Browns, on the rise after a productive offseason, decided to give a chance to one of the best athletes Ohio State has had in recent memory.

Braxton Miller, former Buckeyes quarterback and wide receiver, has signed with the Browns, giving the five-year Ohio State player another chance to make an NFL team.

Miller spent his first three seasons with the Buckeyes as the team's quarterback, throwing for 5,292 yards and 52 touchdowns while also registering back-to-back 1,000-yard seasons on the ground and scoring 32 touchdowns.

But when Miller tore his labrum before the 2014 season, it opened an opportunity for J.T. Barrett, and then Cardale Jones when Barrett got hurt, to shine. And shine they did, with the duo leading the Buckeyes to a national championship.

The next season, with both Barrett and Jones back, Miller returned as a receiver in the H-back position and ended the 2015 season with 260 rushing yards on 6.2 yards per carry and 26 catches for 341 yards with four total touchdowns.

The pure athleticism allowed Miller to be selected in the third round, No. 85 overall by the Houston Texans. While in Houston, Miller tallied 34 catches for 261 yards and a pair of touchdowns in 21

games before eventually moving to the Philadelphia Eagles.

Now in Cleveland, Miller will have to fight for a roster spot in a deeply-talented receiver room, headlined by former LSU wide receivers Odell Beckham Jr. and Jarvis Landry.

But the Browns are known for taking a chance on former Ohio State quarterbacks turned receivers. In 2015, the Browns signed Terrelle Pryor, and in the 2016 season, Pryor racked up 77 catches for 1,007 yards as Cleveland's top receiving target.

QB Barrett Picked Up By Seattle Seahawks

After being waived by the New Orleans Saints in early August, Barrett signed with the Seattle Seahawks, the team announced on Aug. 10. The transaction occurred shortly after Seahawks backup Geno Smith underwent surgery to remove a cyst from his knee.

Barrett – who set numerous school and conference records during his five-year career at Ohio State – went undrafted in 2018 but signed a free-agent deal with the Saints. He spent much of last season bouncing between free agency and the Saints' practice squad but was able to learn under all-pro quarterback Drew Brees.

"Obviously, you know, he's going to be in the Hall of Fame," Barrett said. "The routine that he has each and every day, he trusts it. He believes it. Whether it was good or bad, as far as the result of practice or a game, he sticks with that routine. Just believing in it and that trust, I think that's how great players approach the game."

In Seattle, Barrett will be given every opportunity to win the backup job behind starter Russell Wilson. He'll compete with the aforementioned Smith and former

Continued On Page 8



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first-round pick Paxton Lynch.

In another move, the Seahawks also waived former Ohio State linebacker Chris Worley.

S Kurt Coleman Signs Contract With Buffalo Bills

Former Ohio State safety Kurt Coleman signed a one-year, \$1 million contract with the Buffalo Bills, the team announced on July 19. NFL Network's Ian Rapoport reported that incentives could push the deal to \$2 million.

The 31-year-old Coleman is entering his 10th season in the NFL after a decorated career with the Buckeyes. He was a first-team All-Big Ten selection and first-team All-American in 2009 and was selected by the Philadelphia Eagles in the seventh round (No. 224 overall selection)

of the 2010 NFL draft.

Coleman played four seasons with the Eagles, recording 207 tackles, seven interceptions and six tackles for loss, then had brief stints with the Minnesota Vikings and Kansas City Chiefs. He also spent three years with the Carolina Panthers, where he recorded 37 tackles and three interceptions.

Coleman was released by Carolina last winter and signed with the Saints. He appeared in 16 games (nine starts) and recorded 32 tackles and one forced fumble to help the Saints to the NFC championship game. He was released in February and had been looking for another team ever since.

"I'm probably in the best shape I've been in years," Coleman said this spring, "just having a little bit of extra time to focus on my body and not beat it up every day at OTAs. I think the great thing I have going for me is just being patient, waiting for the right opportunity. We'll see how the cards lay out. I think at the end of the day, I'm going to do what's best for myself and my family, and hopefully the right opportunity comes."

News of Coleman's signing was tied with Rafael Bush's surprising retirement announcement that same day, but it's worth noting he'll be reunited with Bills head coach Sean McDermott, who was his defensive coordinator and position coach with the Eagles.

Tennessee Titans Waive S Damon Webb

The Tennessee Titans waived former Ohio State safety Damon Webb on July 25 with a non-football injury designation.

The 5-11, 198-pound Webb was a third-team All-Big Ten selection as a senior in

2017, capping his college career with Cotton Bowl MVP honors. In that win over USC, he returned an interception for a touchdown, and recorded five tackles.

Webb signed with the Titans as an undrafted free agent following the 2018 NFL draft, reuniting him with his former position coach, Kerry Coombs. He has yet to appear in an NFL game, however.

S Tyvis Powell Signs With Dallas Cowboys

On Aug. 5, just days after he was released by the Houston Texans, former Ohio State safety Tyvis Powell signed with the Dallas Cowboys.

This marks the seventh NFL team for Powell, who was signed by the Seattle Seahawks as an undrafted free agent in 2016. He has appeared in 18 games throughout his career, including eight for the Seahawks and 10 (including one start) with the San Francisco 49ers. Powell has also played for the Cleveland Browns, Indianapolis Colts and New York Jets.

Powell's addition gives the Cowboys five former Buckeyes on the roster, including running backs Ezekiel Elliott and Mike Weber and receivers Devin Smith and Noah Brown.

Houston Texans Sign DT Tracy Sprinkle

The Houston Texans claimed former Ohio State defensive tackle Tracy Sprinkle off waivers on Aug. 10.

Sprinkle was released by the Cleveland Browns on Aug. 9 after a six-day stint with the team that included an appearance in the team's preseason opener against the

Washington Redskins.

A team captain for the Buckeyes as a fifth-year senior in 2017, the 6-2, 293-pound Sprinkle was signed by the Carolina Panthers as an undrafted free agent. After being released by the team, he launched a clothing line, How She Gone Eat, with former Ohio State teammates Jalyn Holmes, Tyquan Lewis and Michael Hill.

Sprinkle was not out of football long, however, as he played in the now-defunct Alliance of American Football in the spring. The league folded after just eight weeks of play, but Sprinkle's performance earned him a tryout with the Kansas City Chiefs in May and likely led to his ultimate signing with Cleveland.

Former OL Zach Slagle Takes Own Life, CTE Suspected

Former Ohio State walk-on offensive lineman Zach Slagle was found dead by gunshot wound in the early morning of Aug. 8.

The 31-year-old Slagle, who played for the Buckeyes from 2006-08, posted what appeared to be a suicide note on his Facebook page that morning, prompting family and police to rush to his home. Police broke down the front door, but he'd already killed himself.

Former Ohio State tight end Jake Ballard has started a GoFundMe in his memory and to raise money for his burial services.

"Zach was selfless as a teammate and friend and endeared himself to anyone who knew him," Ballard said. "He was always the guy that everyone liked to see and be around. Zach was a fun-loving person with a heart of gold."

It has since been reported that Slagle's brain will be sent to the CTE Center at Boston University for examination.



Reynolds Travel "On the Road Again" for 2019 Ohio State Football Away Games

OSU vs. Indiana: Sept. 13-15 – 2-night motorcoach trip with accommodations at the French Lick Resort and Casino, breakfast daily, game tickets and en-route to French Lick enjoy a cruise on the Ohio River in Louisville with lunch. \$699 pp based on two to a room. Land-only package available also.

OSU vs. Nebraska: Sept. 25-30 – 5-night motorcoach trip with 1 overnight in each direction: 1 night at Juner's Castle Casino in Rock Island, Ill.; 3 nights at the Embassy Suites in Omaha, Neb., with breakfast daily, city tour of Lincoln, game tickets and transportation; and 1 night on return at the Marriott Pere Marquette in Peoria, Ill. \$1,199 pp based on two to a room. **Also offering air trip Sept. 26-29** with roundtrip air from Columbus to Omaha and 3 nights at the Embassy Suites in Omaha with breakfast daily, game tickets and transportation, and city tour of Lincoln. \$1,449 pp. Land only package available for Omaha portion.

OSU vs. Northwestern: Oct. 17-20 – 3 nights motorcoach trip to Chicago with game on Friday nights permitting extra free time in Chicago with 3 nights in downtown Westin Magnificent Mile Hotel in the center of downtown Chicago with breakfast daily, game tickets and transportation and Mafia themed tour of Chicago. \$979 pp based on two to a room. **Also offering air trip Oct. 17-20** with 3 nights in Chicago at the

Westin Magnificent Mile Hotel in the center of downtown Chicago with breakfast daily, game tickets in Ohio State section with transportation, roundtrip airport transportation and Mafia themed tour of Chicago. \$1,289 pp based on two to a room. Land only package is available.

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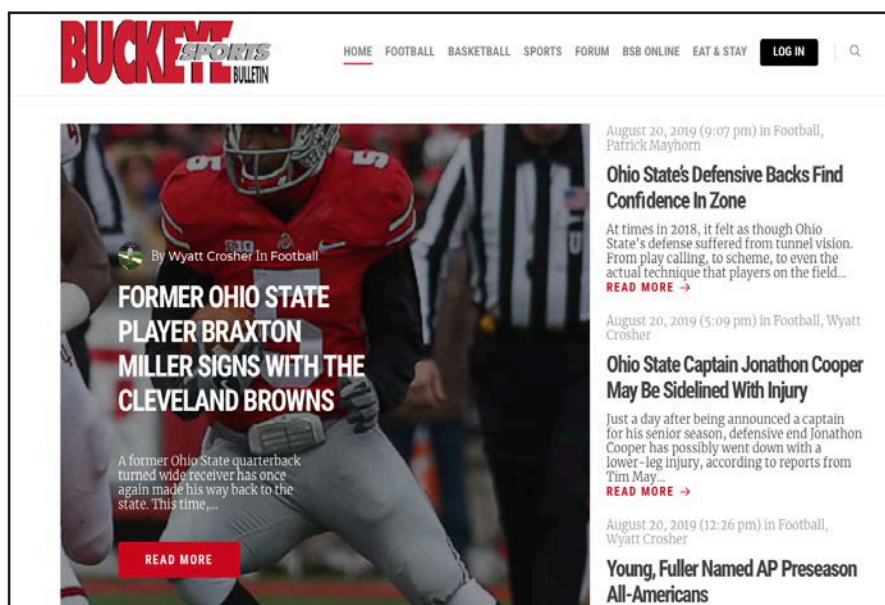
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COVER STORY

Day Took Charge Of Staff

Continued From Page 1

Day had little room for error in building his first staff, but it appears he struck a good balance of veteran coaches with intricate knowledge of the Big Ten and college football as a whole, and young, up-and-coming coaches eager to prove their worth.

At the end of the day, though, this group will be judged on results – not intentions.

“A lot of people come up and they say, ‘a lot of pressure,’ or they start talking about the expectations,” Day said. “It’s been the same (response) from me all along, because you can’t worry about that.”

“People ask me, ‘What if you don’t beat the Team Up North? What if you don’t win the Big Ten championship or a national championship?’ I always come

back with, ‘Well, what if I do?’ That’s the mentality I’ve always had.

“Let’s go play and let’s go maximize the day the best we can. We’re not going to be hesitant about anything, we’re not going to be apprehensive. We’re going to go after people and be aggressive. To start getting anxiety or worry about losing is not going to happen.”

One of the biggest reasons Meyer felt comfortable with stepping away from coaching is because of culture and core values that have already been established at Ohio State.

All Day conceivably has to do is follow that blueprint to be successful.

“I think the easy thing to do is to ask, ‘How are you different from Urban Meyer?’ And that’s not something I really like to answer because, first off, you don’t replace a legend,” Day said. “The more changes you make, the more ener-



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COVER STORY

gy you can take away from something else. If they're worried about learning a new core value, it takes away from their ability to get on the field."

Though he still maintains an office at the Fawcett Center — directly across the street from the Woody Hayes Athletic Center — the image of Meyer as the head coach of the Buckeyes' football program will eventually fade. But even with Day at the helm, things won't look all that different moving forward.

"We were very careful not to change things just to change them," he said. "Slowly, over time, you'll see there will be more and more things that probably fit me more, but the infrastructure that is there is not going to change."

The same thing can be said about Ohio State's recruiting efforts under Day.

While Meyer had championship rings and first-round draft picks to his name, Day doesn't carry the same cachet. He's been able to keep the train rolling, though, thanks to Dwayne Haskins' record-breaking season last fall — for which Day was the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach — and his ability to connect with prospects on a personal level.

"I think the plan is working," Day said. "When someone walks in the building, it's the environment. If we say we're going to be a family, we have to be a family. If you send your son to Ohio State, he's going to be taken care of on the field and developed at the highest level. He's going to be taken care of in the classroom and off the field in all the

things we provide.

"This program is going to be motivated through love, and that's part of being a family. What I say to our guys all the time, and what I say to the recruits is, 'Who do you love the most in your life?' And they all say their family. 'What would you do for them?' And they say anything. Well, why can't we have that same relationship with our players and our coaches? That's really what we talk about with our guys."

It's difficult to follow a legend.

If only we could ask Earle Bruce what it was like to have his predecessor Woody Hayes — winner of three wire service national championships and 13 conference titles — cooped up in an office inside the ROTC building across the street from Ohio Stadium.

Or, rather, talk to Ray Perkins, who had the equally unenviable task of following Paul "Bear" Bryant at Alabama, then we'd better understand the difficult position in which Day finds himself as he begins his full-time head coaching career.

"Every once in a while, you catch yourself and you realize you're the head coach at Ohio State. But it doesn't last long, because you've got to go out there and you've got to work," Day said. "I always thought I'd be in a situation to be a head coach. The idea wasn't just to be a head coach, though. It was to be a head coach for a long time at a great place."

And if all goes as planned, whoever follows Day will have replace a legend, too.



ANDREW LIND

OVERSEEING THE ENTIRE TEAM — Rather than work directly with the quarterbacks in practice, Day now roams the field and watches every position.

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Ohio State Names Captains For 2019 Season

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Just like with the 2018 team, Ohio State's players voted on seven players to lead as team captains heading into this season.

Also like last season, multiple wide receivers were chosen to lead the offense. Additionally, two leaders of the defense were selected as captains for the second year in a row.

The seven named captains were junior running back J.K. Dobbins, fifth-year senior H-backs K.J. Hill and C.J. Saunders, a pair of defensive ends in junior Chase Young and senior Jonathon Cooper, and two-time captains in junior linebacker Tuf Borland and senior safety Jordan Fuller.

Here is a look at the 2019 captains.

J.K. Dobbins

Dobbins heads into the season as one of the most likely to improve statistically after a season when he finished with 1,053 yards on 4.6 yards per carry, well below his numbers from his freshman year.

With Mike Weber gone, Dobbins is the guy in the backfield, and he has proved to be the guy in the locker room as well with the selection as captain.

"I'm excited, I'm honored, because it's a big thing here," Dobbins said. "It's great that my teammates see me as somebody that can lead this team and represent this team in a good way."

As for Dobbins' individual expectations, they are pretty simple.

"I feel like I need to prove to people that I am the best running back in the nation," he said.

K.J. Hill

Hill is a fifth-year senior who comes into this season with the strongest receiving statistics of anyone in his group. He is joined by Saunders as well as seniors Austin Mack and Binjimen Victor to form a veteran unit for a new OSU quarterback to throw to.

After seeing how Parris Campbell, Terry McLaurin and Johnnie Dixon transformed the room, Hill knows he will have to fill some big shoes and step up in some areas as a leader.

"I didn't have to be vocal because of the guys previously," Hill said. "I am the guy now. With them being gone, I know what to expect. I feel like I have to be more vocal."

C.J. Saunders

Saunders is a former walk on who head coach Ryan Day has said will find time situationally in the offense. For the fifth-year senior, this recognition is something that did not shock him but instead feels like something he has earned from his consistent effort both on and off the field.

"The way that my career has progressed and how I have gotten to build relationships with my teammates, it's something that I've strived for. It was never the biggest goal for me," Saunders said of being captain. "I wasn't exactly surprised, but I'm very honored."

Saunders has 27 receptions for 294 yards in his collegiate career, and he will be searching for a more productive place in the offense.



OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

TEAM LEADERS – From left to right, Ohio State defensive end Chase Young, running back J.K. Dobbins, H-back K.J. Hill, defensive end Jonathon Cooper, H-back C.J. Saunders, safety Jordan Fuller and linebacker Tuf Borland were named captains by their teammates.

Tuf Borland

On the defensive side of the ball, for the second straight season, Borland has been the leader for the linebackers group and continues to progress toward becoming the second player in program history to become a three-time captain. The other was quarterback J.T. Barrett.

"It's a tremendous honor," Borland said. "You take a walk down the hallway and you see some of the names that are on there on that captain board. It's truly a blessing."

Borland's 67 tackles last year ranked third on the team, while he also registered nine tackles for loss and forced two fumbles in a season when he struggled to fully recover from an Achilles injury.

This time around, Borland said the time in the offseason to recover has made plenty of difference.

"I feel great," he said. "I'm feeling completely ready, completely healthy and just excited for the season to start."

Jonathon Cooper

Cooper has a chance to live up to the lofty expectations with which he came into the program.

While Cooper's stats don't necessarily pop off the page, he has impressed his teammates enough to earn the captain's honor.

Fellow captain and defensive end Chase Young said it is crucial to have a player like Cooper on your team to help lead the group.

"You need it. You need a dude who's right there with you every step of the way, feeding off each other," Young said. "It's definitely good to have him."

Jordan Fuller

Another two-time captain is Fuller, whose consistency in the Buckeyes' secondary has earned him a spot on the AP Preseason All-America Second Team.

Fuller may not ever be the most vocal leader Ohio State has, but his play has talked plenty in the past, as have his 81 tackles in 2018, which tied for the team lead.

For Fuller, he understands what being a captain for this program means, and he is ready to take on all the pressures that he faced from a season ago.

"Just being voted a captain by your teammates, it just says a lot, and I'm just blessed to be in this position," he said. "I'm just going to give them everything I have."

Chase Young

Young comes in after a strong 2018 campaign that had him sack the quarterback

10½ times, enough to earn a spot on the first-team AP Preseason All-America team.

Young now isn't strictly filling up the box score, as he has proved to be a leader on the team, one that most of the other captains described as the most vocal on the team.

Young said that becoming a captain for the Buckeyes was something that was "on his list."

"I feel like when I got more into the program, I got the meaning of what being a Buckeye was. I was like, 'Man, I want to be a part of that group of people who can lead a team,'" he said. "The opportunity was there, and I really took it."



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Right Tackle Among OSU's Key Position Battles

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Under Urban Meyer, there were often plenty of position battles on both sides of the ball that were left undecided until the very last moment heading into week one. New head coach Ryan Day seems to be fine with doing the exact same thing.

Though many of these positions appear to have heavy front-runners as to who will be starting against Florida Atlantic on Aug. 31, Day has not rushed to make these decisions final, waiting to see as much as he can of fall camp before pulling the trigger.

With nine players gone via the NFL draft and another four picked up by teams immediately afterward, there are plenty of positions ready for new faces to come in and take over.

This is a look at each of the position groups and how they look as far as who is expected to start, who is expected to come off the bench, and just how much of a battle each position still has.

Quarterback

This is one of the few positions that has been given a concrete answer. On Aug. 19, Day officially named Georgia transfer Justin Fields the week one starter over Kentucky transfer Gunnar Hoak and fifth-year senior Chris Chugunov.

But Day made it clear that Fields has not guaranteed himself a safe spot at the top just yet.

"I think all quarterbacks have done a good job this camp," Day said. "The stories of the national championship team, three quarterbacks playing, everybody has to be ready to go. All guys had good camps, but Justin kind of separated himself the last week. He'll be the starter."

Day also made no definite decision on whether Hoak or Chugunov is the clear No. 2 behind Fields at this point in time, with Hoak still needing to learn the



ANDREW LIND

BACK TO FULL STRENGTH – After missing all of last season as he rehabbed a leg injury suffered during the sixth game of the 2017 campaign, Ohio State offensive lineman Branden Bowen hopes to secure a starting spot at right tackle. He's battled redshirt freshman Nicholas Petit-Frere throughout camp.

system after having the benefit of only a limited number of practices since his transfer.

"I think Gunnar and Chris both bring good skill packages to the table," Day said. "They both are accurate throwing the ball, have a good feel for anticipation and touch. They are a little bit more athletic than you think they are."

"We'll let these guys keep learning the offense. With Gunnar, we've practiced 14 or 15 –only been in the offense really 15 practices. So, really, he's at where Justin

was coming out of the spring. So he'll keep growing day in and day out. They'll keep working. As we get closer to the game, we'll decide if Justin were to come out of the game, who would go in next."

Behind those three, redshirt freshman Danny Vanatsky had his black stripe removed the same day as Fields was named the starter and could be the No. 4 in case of dire circumstances.

Running Back

This one has been assumed for quite a while. With Mike Weber gone in the draft, this is once again junior J.K. Dobbins' backfield to dominate. While Weber was injured in 2017, Dobbins, then a true freshman, stepped in and exploded for 1,403 rushing yards on 7.2 yards per carry.

Both of those totals dropped pretty substantially while Dobbins split time with Weber a season ago, but with no major competitors expected to take a lot of reps away from him, Dobbins could be due for yet another major-impact season.

As with the quarterback, the backup running back spot has been hotly contested in fall camp, with many thinking redshirt freshman Master Teague would be able to take the spot. But injury problems still persist for the second-year back.

It now appears that Demario McCall will start the season as the No. 2 back behind Dobbins.

"Demario has had a good camp," Day said. "He's done some really good things. I think he can really be a weapon for us. I think there's a chance you could see them all play right now. I'd say maybe Demario has the leg up on those other guys right now."

Among the other possibilities behind McCall and Teague are a pair of freshmen in Steele Chambers and Marcus Crowley, both of whom lost their black stripes during fall camp.

Wide Receiver

The wide receiver room lost three fifth-year receivers, all of whom played major roles in the offense, so one would think the door is open for some new faces in 2019.

That is only somewhat true, as three current seniors expect to immediately take over as the starters this season. K.J. Hill, Binjimen Victor and Austin Mack should be starting as Fields' primary targets, while the underclassmen begin to sneak into the offense and make some key contributions.

Among those is five-star freshman Garrett Wilson as well as sophomore Chris Olave, who really came into his own in the second half of 2018.

Also, don't sleep on fifth-year senior C.J. Saunders to get a significantly higher snap count in his final season, especially after the former walk-on was selected as a captain for the team this year. Day and the players alike must be seeing something with Saunders this year, both on the field and off it, and he may be able to find a place in some short-throw areas.

Redshirt freshman Jaelen Gill, junior Jaylen Harris and potentially freshman Jameson Williams could see the field in limited roles at points in the season, especially if there are any injuries to the starters as there were to Mack and Victor in 2018.

Tight End

All three of the tight ends who saw meaningful time in 2018 are back for this season, and it can be expected that there will be times for all three to get on the field in various situations.

Junior Luke Farrell is likely the tight end who will find the most time on the field, but senior Rashod Berry has shown glimpses of greatness and could contend for that spot if he can find ways to stand out in the offense, as he did in the

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Maryland game last season.

Sophomore Jeremy Ruckert is still the tight end who should be expected in more of a passing role than either Farrell or Berry, and maybe with a full collegiate season under his belt, there will be a larger opportunity to see him work with Fields.

This trio combined for only 30 receptions in 2018, 29 of those coming from both Berry and Farrell, the two who are supposed to be more of the blockers vs. Ruckert. With some new faces coaching the offense, only time will tell if the Buckeyes find ways to use the tight ends in the offense as more than just blockers for the upcoming season.

Offensive Line

Four out of the five spots on the offensive line seem quite secure. From left to right, junior Thayer Munford is a clear lock at left tackle, being the only returning starter from 2018. At left guard, Rutgers transfer Jonah Jackson should be the guy.

In the middle, it's looking like sophomore Josh Myers has the job pretty secure, and to the right of him, sophomore Wyatt Davis impressed as a starter in the Rose Bowl and will be the guy at right guard.

It's that right tackle position that seems like a near coin flip between senior Branden Bowen and redshirt freshman Nicholas Petit-Frere. Bowen has the clear edge in experience, but he missed all of 2018 with a leg injury. Petit-Frere is one of the highest-rated commits Ohio State has ever had and is already impressing in camp as he continues to put on the necessary weight.

When Day was asked about who had an edge, he didn't really have a solid answer.

"Those guys are still battling it out," he said. "They're doing a great job. I anticipate both will play. Branden Bowen has probably had the best camp. He's at a certain level, playing really well. Nick has done a really good job as well. Right now they both deserve to play."

Other backups who are next in line for playing time should be senior Joshua Alabi, junior Gavin Cupp and freshman Harry Miller, who lost his black stripe during fall camp.

Defensive End

Ohio State's defensive end corps is immensely talented, as evidenced by both starters being selected as team captains.

Junior Chase Young could be one of the best defensive players in the country, and that will only make senior Jonathon Cooper's job on the other side of the line easier and give him more opportunity to make big plays.

The talent isn't too shabby behind these two either, as sophomores Tyreke Smith and Tyler Friday will certainly see time this year, and don't forget about Zach Harrison, Ohio State's top prospect in the 2019 class, who may be a year away from major time but could surely impress in spurts.

Redshirt freshman Javonte Jean-Baptiste and freshman Noah Potter, whose black stripe is gone, also have shown plenty of potential.

If there is one position Ohio State is absolutely stacked at, this is it.

Defensive Tackle

Seniors Robert Landers, Jashon



ANDREW LIND

NEXT IN LINE – With 53 tackles and nine passes deflected in just 27 games over two seasons, Ohio State junior Jeff Okudah is primed to be the Buckeyes' next first-round cornerback.

Cornell and Davon Hamilton lead a group that also appears to hold some solid depth, specifically enough to have four members at defensive tackle who will also get extended snap counts.

Cornell is likely to be a starter, as is Hamilton, but Hamilton will be splitting time with Landers to start the season.

Aside from Landers, Cornell and Hamilton, sophomore Taron Vincent will likely find his way into plenty of game action, even as a new face between these major veteran presences.

While those four seem to have separated themselves from the rest of the pack, there should be moments when sophomore Tommy Togiai gets an opportunity as well as junior Haskell Garrett.

Much like the defensive ends, this is a position that has not seen much "battle" to it. That's not to say there's not a chance for some new faces to make an impact, but with the three seniors ready to go and Vincent looking like the clear choice at No. 4, the debate is not quite as riveting as other positions.

Middle Linebacker

Almost certainly the most highly contested position on the defense, the middle linebacker position seems to be neck and neck between junior Tuf Borland and junior Baron Browning as well as sophomore Teradja Mitchell.

Borland was the starter for most of 2018 and has been named captain for the second straight season, so there's plenty of reason to think he is the front-runner here. There are also some very nice comments from co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison to help his case.

"I like everything about Tuf Borland's game," Mattison said. "Borland is another one that comes out to practice every day, extremely intelligent."

But Browning is the unproven, high-potential guy who, at the very least,

should expect to be seen as an easy sub whenever Borland needs a rest. Mitchell could be found in a similar position, but as just a sophomore, it is likely his time will be stretched thinner than the other two duking it out in the middle.

Outside Linebacker

Senior Malik Harrison and junior Pete Werner seem very much secure in these spots as starters, while sophomore Dallas Gant should find snaps as a clear No. 2.

Mattison has also had plenty of positives to say about Werner, calling him "a top guy at his position." While this hasn't been said, the words may be short on Harrison because he proved what he

can do on the field in 2018 more than Werner did and should be expected to be a strong force once again in his final season with the Buckeyes.

A pair of freshmen – Cade Stover and Craig Young – both lost their black stripes in the fall, and sophomore K'Vaughan Pope could be in line for some time on the field as well, giving the linebackers some much-needed depth after this same corps struggled for much of the previous season with stopping big plays down the field.

Cornerback

Junior Jeff Okudah and fifth-year senior Damon Arnette are as locked as they seemingly can be, with Okudah especially having incredibly high expectations as a lockdown corner. Arnette has impressed with his energy through much of spring and fall camp and could be due for an impressive final season, one he almost didn't have as he contemplated leaving for the NFL.

Secondary coach Jeff Hafley's duo is backed up by redshirt sophomore Shaun Wade, who looked solid in plenty of playing time last season, as well as sophomore Sevyn Banks, who has been lauded for his potential.

Safety/Bullet

The safety position has some switch-ups due to the creation of the "Bullet" position, which is a linebacker-safety hybrid spot. That position should go to junior Brendon White, with junior Jahsen Wint as the clear-cut backup.

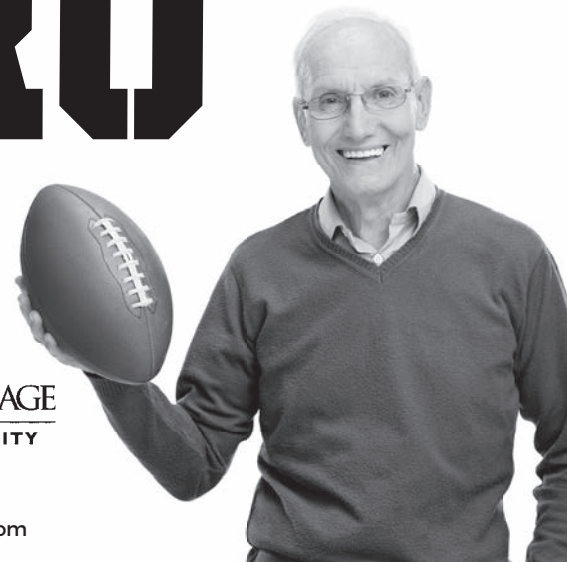
As for the regular safety spot, senior Jordan Fuller has been one of the most consistent players of Ohio State's defense and should continue to be that heading into his final year.

Junior Isaiah Pryor had some rough stretches a season ago, often being out of position on some huge plays, but he has a chance to get some major reps, as does sophomore Josh Proctor, who has been highly regarded by many in camp, including Chase Young, as a breakout defensive player to look for this season.

"He just looks ready to me," Young said. "He's making plays. He's got the body. I feel like he's getting the feel a little bit more, I feel like he'll be ready."

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QB Justin Fields Will Lead New-Look Offense

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The tension was palpable. Fingers were poised to tweet to the awaiting world outside the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. All that was missing was a white plume of smoke to announce the new pope, uh, quarterback for the Ohio State University.

OK, it wasn't dramatic at all. More of a foregone conclusion that head coach Ryan Day confirmed midday Aug. 19 when he announced that sophomore Justin Fields would start the Aug. 31 opener against Florida Atlantic.

Fields is the "four seasons" guy. He transferred after one season as a backup at Georgia in time for the winter quarter at Ohio State, participated in the spring

game, stuck around for summer conditioning and earned the starting nod in the preseason fall camp.

"I feel like I've improved a lot overall, every part of my game," Fields said Aug. 19. "I feel way more comfortable than in the spring, and I think all my teammates see that. Coach Day definitely sees it. It's a great honor being the starting quarterback at such a prestigious university, so I'm definitely excited."

It was a given, barring injury or a meltdown, that Fields was not coming to Ohio State to sit on the bench again.

While Day waited until the third week of camp to make it the quarterback choice official, the offense overall had more uncertainty heading into the season than the defense despite much less turnover of staff.

There was only one change (aside

from wide receivers coach Brian Hartline having the interim tag removed) when Euclid, Ohio, native Mike Yurcich left Oklahoma State after six seasons to replace Day as the passing game coordinator/quarterbacks coach.

There were four new faces on the defensive staff, but they had nine returning starters to work with compared to four on offense: senior receiver Austin Mack, fourth-year junior tight end Luke Farrell, junior left tackle Thayer Munford and junior running back J.K. Dobbins.

Yurcich during his time with the other OSU was twice nominated for the Broyles Award as the nation's outstanding assistant coach. His teams averaged

38.0 points per game and 478.3 yards per game.

His offenses have been ranked in the top 10 in PASSING?? efficiency in each of the past three seasons, and they've been ranked in the top 20 in passing yards per attempt in his time in Stillwater.



Mike Yurcich

That's good news for Buckeye fans, who got spoiled by Dwayne Haskins when in his one year as a starter he threw for school records of 4,831 yards and 50 touchdowns in leading Ohio State to a 13-1 record last season.

Fields must prove himself as a passer, but he's a more dynamic runner. Nonetheless Day said the goal is to not change too much of the offense just because Fields will take the snaps.

"It's going to be very, very similar," Day said. "His skill set, he has a lot of different things than Dwayne had. He's a little bit more athletic and faster and stronger. He can run. But it will be very similar. We'll see the same type of plays. We're not all of a sudden going to go drastically different."

"We'll probably emphasize some different packages with him. For the most part it will still be the Ohio State offense."

Whether the Buckeyes can duplicate the success Haskins and his teammates had is another question. The offensive line will be revamped, and the receiving corps lost its first-, third- and fourth-leading receivers in Parris Campbell, Johnnie Dixon and Terry McLaurin.

K.J. Hill is the leading returnee. He had 70 catches for 885 yards (12.6 average) and six touchdowns. It appears he will play the Parris Campbell role at H-back.

"I think K.J. is pretty complete in terms of his skill set," Day said. "He can do just about everything, and I think in the end it's just going to come down to how durable will he be late in the season and can his stamina sustain throughout a game."

The cupboard is far from bare with the likes of senior Binjimen Victor, sophomore Chris Olave, redshirt freshman Jaelen Gill, true freshman Garrett Wilson and others.

The offensive line is a work in progress beginning with Munford, who is working his way back from an injury. He saw his practice time limited early in fall camp, but he will have the No. 1 left tackle spot.

Third-year sophomore Josh Myers has nailed the starting spot at center after backing All-American Michael Jordan last season.

Jonah Jackson, a graduate transfer from Rutgers, will be at left guard while sophomore Wyatt Davis starts at right guard.

The only spot open is right tackle, where fifth-year senior Branden Bowen is battling second-year freshman Nicholas Petit-Frere.

"I anticipate both will play," Day said on Aug. 19. "Branden Bowen has probably had the best camp. He's at a certain level, playing really well. Nick has done a really good job as well. Right now, they both deserve to play."

There's no contest to see who will be

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FOOTBALL PREVIEW: OFFENSIVE OVERVIEW

carrying the ball the most. Dobbins, after two years of sharing the load with Mike Weber (now trying to make the Dallas Cowboys) is a man possessed after calling last season for him “a failure” and “terrible” despite leading the Buckeyes in rushing with 1,053 yards on a 4.6 average with 10 touchdowns.

He felt sluggish and uninspired at times but has dropped weight and gained quickness, and he is ready for a big season, especially if the Buckeyes, as expected, don't pass as much.

“I want that responsibility of the team relying on me in times of need,” Dobbins said.

Day has harped all preseason camp that he needs backup for Dobbins. Junior Demario McCall was named the backup, but freshmen Marcus Crowley and Steele Chambers have been getting reps in the absence of injured second-year freshman Master Teague.

The tight end position is deep and talented, although their primary job is blocking. Junior Luke Farrell led the group with 20 catches for 205 yards and a TD last season.

He'll be pushed for playing time by senior Rashod Berry, junior Jake Hausmann and sophomore Jeremy Ruckert. Because there is quantity and quality, there may be some packages with two tight ends or maybe even more.

Justin Time

Fields, from Kennesaw, Ga., already had college game experience, having played 12 of 14 games for Georgia in 2018. The five-star recruit completed 27 of 39 passes for 328 yards and four touchdowns and had four rushing scores along with 266 yards on 42 carries (6.3-yard average).

It takes more than good stats to be the starting quarterback at Ohio State, though.

“You have to prove to your teammates and coaches that you're worthy of being a starter,” Day said. “A lot comes with that – leadership, ability to control the offense, making checks up front, protection checks, making good reads in the run game, locating the football, taking care of the football. It's not just going out there and playing, it's moving the football down the field.”

Fields was picked over graduate transfer Gunnar Hoak, who arrived from Kentucky to participate in spring ball, and Chris Chugonov, the graduate transfer from West Virginia in his second season with the Buckeyes. His only game last year was against Rutgers.

Hoak, from Dublin Coffman High School in suburban Columbus, played in five games for Kentucky last season.

“You've got to come in and compete,”

Hoak said. “You can't come in here with the attitude of just you're going to sit back and let somebody else take it. You have to come in with a good attitude and a good mind-set.”

Ready To Rumble

Dobbins said he dropped to 8 percent body fat from 12, part of his total makeover physically and mentally.

“I have a chip on my shoulder because I know I can do better,” he said. “I feel like everything is coming together at the right time.”

As much as Dobbins wants to be the workhorse, Day wants to make sure he's fresh come November when the weather potentially gets nastier and running becomes essential.

“I think all three guys, four guys with Master when he gets healthy, want that spot, but they have got to learn to take care of the ball and we have to learn to be able to trust them,” Day said.

Making The Catch

Hill and the gang will get help when senior Austin Mack (26 receptions for 12.7 yards a catch and a TD last season) gets healthy so Fields, or whoever is tossing the ball, will have options.

Olave burst onto the scene late in the season, highlighted by two 24-yard TD catches against Michigan as well as blocking a punt that led to another score.

“We think he's an every-down receiver,” Day said.

With the tight ends itching to be more involved in the passing game by actually catching passes, the wide receivers corps is on notice that they have to be at their best every game.

Line Them Up

Offensive line coach Greg Studrawa looks at four-star true freshman Harry Miller from Buford, Ga., and can't help but get excited about his possibilities, such as being the No. 2 center behind Myers – rather quickly.

“I'm hoping by that first game Harry's the backup unless something happens here,” Studrawa said. “I believe the kid can do it.”

Miller's part of an offensive line that Studrawa feels will allow for a rotation without a drop in performance.

“The competition is unbelievable,” he said. “I think there's four tackles that can start anywhere in this league, in a lot of places,” he said. “Sometimes maybe it's a guy that's banged up as the year goes on, you limit his plays. You get him out and let the other guy play.”

“So it could be singular (one sub) or what Coach Day likes to do is getting the second unit in and see how they do. That's awesome.”



ANDREW LIND

HOMETOWN KID – Former Dublin (Ohio) Coffman quarterback Gunnar Hoak transferred to Ohio State after he graduated from Kentucky this spring to compete with Justin Fields for the starting quarterback spot.

Fields Named Starter As Season Approaches

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day's announcement on Aug. 19 that sophomore quarterback Justin Fields would be the Buckeyes' starter for the season opener against Florida Atlantic should come as a surprise to no one. After all, the first-year head coach sought out the former five-star prospect when he announced his intention to transfer from Georgia in December.

The journey to get to this point in the quarterback room was not as cut-and-dried as expected, however.

Redshirt sophomore Tate Martell, who served as Heisman Trophy finalist Dwayne Haskins' backup one year ago, figured to be Fields' primary competition. But he transferred to Miami in January, leaving that role to redshirt freshman Matthew Baldwin.

Baldwin was seeing his first action since he suffered a devastating knee injury that prematurely ended his senior season of high school, though, and it showed as he struggled in the spring game in April. He transferred to TCU just a few weeks later, citing a desire to be closer to home rather than blame his performance throughout the spring.

That left Fields and fifth-year senior Chris Chugunov, a former West Virginia transfer, as the only scholarship quarterbacks on the roster, so Day addressed the less-than-ideal situation by adding another signal caller to the mix.

Dublin, Ohio, native Gunnar Hoak was looking for a new home after finishing his degree at Kentucky, and Ohio State offered him a chance to compete for the starting spot. He appeared in five games for the Wildcats last season,

completing 13 of 26 passes for 167 yards and two touchdowns compared to one interception, and his experience at an SEC program was surely attractive to the staff given the overall lack of depth at the position.

After backing up Jake Fromm at Georgia last season, Fields clearly didn't transfer to be the backup again. But Day – who previously served as the Buckeyes' offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach – still wanted to hold an open competition in fall camp.

"One of our core philosophies is that you don't just get given the starting position," Day said at Big Ten Media Days in mid-July. "You have to earn everything you get around here, and he hasn't done that.



Justin Fields

"The hard thing for everybody to realize is that he is coming on the heels of (record-setting quarterback) Dwayne Haskins. I think a lot of people believe Dwayne went from zero to 60 so fast and he just kind of jumped into the Heisman Trophy race, and that will happen (again). Well, that was a very different scenario than Justin Fields."

Day had a point, too.

Haskins was a redshirt sophomore last season and had time to learn Ohio State's extensive playbook before stepping into the starting role. He also had important experience as a backup, highlighted by his performance in relief of J.T. Barrett in the 2017 win over Michigan. Fields and Hoak, on the other hand, have a limited grasp of the playbook after only eight and two months in the program, respectively.

"Justin hasn't won the job yet, and that's the first step in all of this," Day said. "I know everybody wants to get way ahead of this and start talking about

the Heisman, but how about winning the starting quarterback job first? You can't win the job when you're just learning the offense."

By comparison, Chugunov (6-1, 208) has had a full season in the system and is the only quarterback on the Buckeyes' roster with starting experience. He started two games for the Mountaineers in 2017, completing 43 of 90 passes for 536 yards with three touchdowns and two interceptions.

All three battled throughout fall camp, but it became increasingly clear with each practice that the job was Fields' to lose. Day just didn't want to name him the starter until he stepped up and seized the job, which he seemingly did during a full team scrimmage on Aug. 17.

"I think all the quarterbacks have done a good job this camp," Day said on Aug. 19. "The stories of the national championship team, three quarterbacks playing, everybody has to be ready to go. All guys had good camps, but Justin kind of separated himself the last week. He'll be the starter."

Day sees plenty of room for Fields (6-3, 223) to grow, though, even with the season fast approaching.

"I still don't think he's where he needs to be," he said, "but after this last week, I do feel like he's played at a starter level, and I think he's earned the job. And we'll see where it goes from there."

If Fields doesn't perform well, Hoak (6-4, 212) and Chugunov will be waiting in the wings. Which one will be No. 2 on the depth chart is still up in the air, however.

"I think Gunnar and Chris both bring good skill packages to the table. They both are accurate throwing the ball, have a good feel for anticipation and touch. They are a little bit more athletic than you think they are," Day said. "With Gunnar, we've practiced 14 or 15 (times), he's only been in the offense really 15

Projected Starter

Quarterback
1 • Justin Fields

6-3 • 223 • So.

Kennesaw (Ga.) Harrison

Completed 27 of 39 pass attempts for 328 yards and four touchdowns and ran for 266 yards and four scores as a backup at Georgia last season.

practices. So, really, he's at where Justin was coming out of the spring. He'll keep growing day in and day out. They'll keep working. As we get closer to the game, we'll decide if Justin were to come out of the game, who would go in next."

As he prepares for his first game as a starting quarterback, Fields – who completed 27 of 39 pass attempts for 328 yards and four touchdowns with zero interceptions and ran for 266 yards and four scores for the Bulldogs last season – plans to practice like he's still fighting for the spot.

"You really can't look at yourself as a starter," Fields said. "You kind of have to look at it as yourself that you're not the starter, so you keep working. I kind of tell myself that I'm not there yet, I'm not where I need to be so I can just continue to keep working and just get better every day. I feel like I have to improve on everything, really. I'm not where I need to be, and I definitely think I have a long way to go."

On the other hand, there's no denying the strides Fields has made during his eight months on campus. He's getting comfortable with the playbook, bonding with his teammates and leading the team down the field in practice.

"I definitely feel like the offense looks to me as a leader now, and I've definitely gotten more comfortable talking to the whole team and just trying to lead all those guys," Fields said. "I think for us

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FOOTBALL PREVIEW: QUARTERBACKS

to be successful, all the guys on offense and all the guys on defense are going to have to trust me. So that kind of was my goal and one of my goals of the offseason is just to get all those guys to trust me.”

Day echoed those sentiments.

“You have to prove to your teammates and coaches that you’re worthy of being a starter,” he said. “A lot comes with that: leadership, ability to control the offense, making checks up front, protection checks, making good reads in the run game, locating the football and taking care of the football.

“You can see when the guys are around in the huddle. There’s a confidence about him. He’s moving the ball down the field, and his completion percentage is at a certain point. That’s how you earn a starting job.”

By naming Fields the starter, Day can no longer hide him from the lofty expectations that come with being one of the highest-rated recruits of all time. Anything less than a Big Ten title and maybe even a trip to New York for the Heisman Trophy presentation will be a disappointment.

“That’s hard,” Day said. “When you say it like that, it makes you think. Because you’re right, he just got here. The expectations are almost ridiculous. But it’s the same thing as being the head coach at Ohio State. That’s what you signed up for. We’re here for a reason. If you get caught up in those type of things, you get yourself jammed up. I think he understands that. Again, he always envi-

sioned himself at a school where he’s going to be in a high-profile position.

“I think he’s always been ready for the spotlight. How he handles it, we’ll see. It’s not going to be perfect. There are going to be mistakes along the way. The only way he grows is by failing. I mentioned that before. Dwayne had the opportunity to come in against Illinois and UNLV, throws a pick-six, makes a bunch of mistakes, but it was mop-up time.

“Nobody was noticing. Justin doesn’t have that luxury. We’re going to have to manage those situations the best we can, just support him the best we can, move forward.”

Ohio State will lean heavily upon junior running back and team captain J.K. Dobbins, especially early in the season, which should allow Fields to grow as a passer. His mobility should make the Buckeyes’ offense just as dangerous as last year’s, even if the passing game isn’t as efficient.

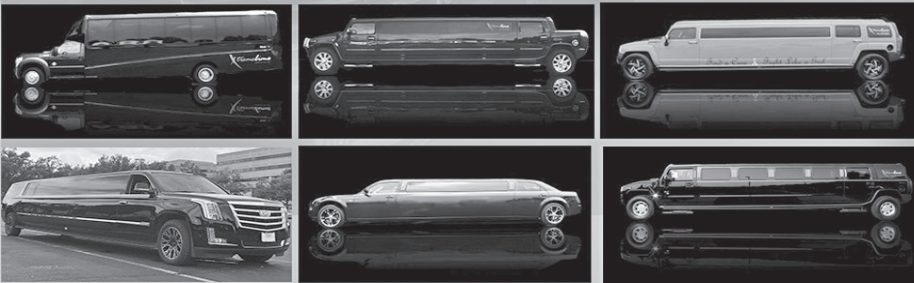
“I definitely have the potential to be a great player, and God has blessed me with a lot of ability,” Fields said. “I think this just goes for anybody. I think people can do whatever they want to if they just discipline themselves and do what you need to do to really do it. Some people have the potential to be great and they just don’t take advantage of it, so I think you just do what you need to do and be disciplined and do the things that you don’t like to do, then you’ll eventually get to where you want to go.”

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Backup Running Backs In Close Competition

By JOE DEMPSEY
 Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ohio State running back unit is one of the most interesting to break down as the season rapidly approaches.

There's not much drama behind who will be the starter as J.K. Dobbins will look to extend his Ohio State record to three straight seasons of 1,000 or more rushing yards to begin his career.

Although last year Dobbins did not rush for as many yards as he did as a freshman, barely passing the 1,000-yard threshold as a sophomore, he is poised for the best season of his career with former backfield mate Mike Weber gone to the NFL, selected in the seventh round by the Dallas Cowboys.

"I loved having Mike here, and there were benefits to sharing carries," Dobbins said. "But knowing that I'll be getting more carries than my first two years is kind of a good feeling because I'll be able to get into a rhythm and stuff like that. I think that helps a lot."

Though Dobbins had success as a sophomore, he felt as though he regressed. The coaches have noticed a different Dobbins this offseason.

The La Grange, Texas, native requested that running backs coach Tony Alford work him like a freshman instead of like a two-year starter, and the shift in mentality helped him reach another level this offseason.

At 5-10 and 217 pounds, Dobbins is an all-purpose back possessing an effective combination of speed and power to go along with his elusiveness and vision. However, he felt like he left a lot of yards on the field last year, saying he was trying too hard to break big runs instead of taking sure yardage.

"J.K.'s got to run big for us and play big for us the first six games," head coach Ryan Day said. "The offensive line is going to block, but we've talked to J.K. several times about turning 3-yard carries into 5-yard carries and 5-yard carries into 6- and 7-yard carries. If he does that, the big plays will come."

"Last year when he was going in and out with Mike, I think sometimes he was looking for the home run. I think he'd tell you that. This year in those first six games he's got to get his pads down and play veteran for us, play good. The offensive line has to do the same thing to take the pressure off that position."

Following a great offseason in the strength and conditioning program, Dobbins returned poised for a dynamic season, dropping his body fat percentage from 12 to 8 percent.

With Dobbins set, the real question in the running back room for Alford and Day is who will be Dobbins' backup, with the competition

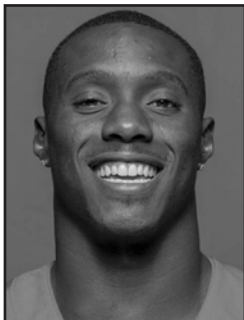


ANDREW LIND

BELL COW BACK – Ohio State team captain J.K. Dobbins is expected to get the bulk of the carries this season, but the Buckeyes are still waiting on junior Demario McCall, redshirt freshman Master Teague or true freshman Marcus Crowley to step up as his backup.

coming down to four talented backs with a variety of body types and skill sets.

"The biggest thing is going to be ball security in the end: Who do we trust? We give the ball to him," Day said.



Demario McCall

Junior Demario McCall (5-9, 195) possesses the most game-changing ability as far as speed, quickness and home-run potential, but he has dealt with various injuries in Columbus and has struggled to solidify a spot in the rotation.

McCall came on strong at the end of last season, working his way into certain packages as a pass-catching threat out of the backfield. He also serves as a primary return man for the Buckeyes.

Redshirt freshman Master Teague (5-11, 220) and true freshmen Steele Chambers (6-2, 215) and Marcus Crowley (6-1, 205) are the other scholarship tailbacks competing for the

backup running back spot.

Teague, a product of Murfreesboro (Tenn.) Blackman, played well during his first season but appeared in only a handful of games, allowing him to redshirt and give him another year of eligibility if needed.

Teague fought through an injury during fall camp, but his combination of power and speed makes him effective as a runner and pass catcher, similar to Weber.

Crowley enrolled early out of Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Academy and has received primarily positive reviews from his coaches and teammates. It's clear he needs to have a better grasp of the offense for him to be the No. 2 back.

"He's big, he's strong and he's tough," Day said. "He's still learning the offense. He'll still make some freshman mistakes here and there, but I like his toughness. He'll stick his face on people. He practices really, really hard. He just needs more experience, just needs to stay focused and make sure that he

Projected Starter

Tailback
2 • J.K. Dobbins

5-10 • 217 • Jr.

La Grange, Texas

Has amassed 2,876 yards from scrimmage and 17 touchdowns during his first two seasons in Columbus.


knows what he's doing when he's out there, because when he does, he runs hard and he's physical."

Chambers did not arrive until June after concluding his senior season of baseball at Roswell (Ga.) Blessed Trinity Catholic, but the well-rounded athlete will be ready sooner than later.


The Buckeyes likely do not want to use both Crowley and Chambers too much as true freshmen, but Alford and Day will surely use the best

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FOOTBALL PREVIEW: RUNNING BACKS



ANDREW LIND

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF AN OPPORTUNITY – With redshirt freshman Master Teague (left) sidelined for much of fall camp with an undisclosed injury, true freshman Marcus Crowley (right) has been gaining valuable repetitions in fall camp.

back available, regardless of year.

The main question marks for the freshmen tailbacks will be learning the intricacies of the playbook and progressing as pass blockers, which is an important role in the offense.

Day has spoken highly of each of the running backs but mentioned that McCall stood out.

“Demario has had a good camp,” Day said. “He’s done some really good things. I think he can really be a weapon for us. Master has practiced a couple days. When he has, he’s looked good. He’s been limited all camp, which is hard.

I know it’s frustrating for him. Then the two freshmen have been running hard.

“I think there’s a chance you could see them all play right now. I’d say maybe Demario has the leg up on those other guys right now.”

Regardless of whether McCall becomes the No. 2 back or not, he will factor into the offense somehow.

The fourth-year junior from North Ridgeville, Ohio, possesses too much dynamic playmaking ability to not see the field.

Dobbins likes what he has seen from the

backups who are pushing him, adding that understanding the offense and improving as a pass blocker were critical for his success when he was a freshman All-American.

“They’re some hard workers,” Dobbins said. “I feel if they keep working hard they’ll be good. They just have to keep working the offense and watch and learn how to do it here so they can succeed.”

In addition to the scholarship backs, walk-ons Xavier Johnson (6-2, 212), Amari McMahon (6-0, 205), Mitch Rossi (6-0, 240) and Robert Cope (5-9, 200) provide depth for

the Buckeye backfield.

Hungry to redeem himself and reach his potential, Dobbins expressed his excitement for the upcoming season.

“There’s a lot at stake,” Dobbins said. “My main goal is to win a national championship, of course,” Dobbins said. “With that I feel like I’m the best running back in the nation, and I want to prove that and I didn’t do that last year. And I have a chip on my shoulder because I know I can do better.

“I feel like everything is coming together at the right time.”

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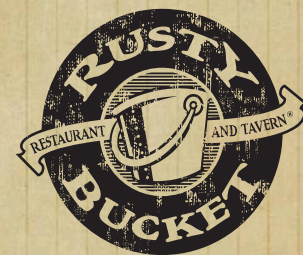
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Wide Receivers A Mix Of Youth And Leadership

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

With the loss of three of Ohio State's more productive receivers from last season in Parris Campbell, Terry McLaurin and Johnnie Dixon, you might expect to see a regression in the wide receiving group this year.

Adding to that was the leadership all three receivers brought to that room, all becoming captains in their fifth-year seasons and all being strong voices when leading the most productive passing game the program has ever had.

Also helping the receivers was Dwayne Haskins, a first-time starter in 2018 but one whose arm nearly amounted to 5,000 yards, while hitting the 50-touchdown threshold and getting the best out of the talent at his disposal.

Three impact receivers have moved on to the NFL, and the greatest passer in program history has, too. How are the new-look wide receivers supposed to compare?

If you ask K.J. Hill, one of seven captains for Ohio State this season, he says that 2018 was only the beginning.

"I feel like last year they left a spot, just a checkpoint, and now we have to reach another checkpoint with the people in the room," Hill, who caught 70 passes for 885 yards and six touchdowns last year, said. "We did it, we felt it, and now we know we can take it to another level."

Projected Starters

| Wide Receiver 11 • Austin Mack | Wide Receiver 9 • Binjimen Victor | H-Back 14 • K.J. Hill |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6-2 • 215 • Sr. Fort Wayne (Ind.) Bishop Luers | 6-4 • 199 • Sr. Pompano Beach (Fla.) Coconut Creek | 6-0 • 195 • 5th North Little Rock, Ark. |
| Finished with 26 receptions for 331 yards and a touchdown during an injury-shortened season. | Ended 2018 with a collegiate-high 354 yards on 21 catches. | Finished the season with 70 receptions for 885 yards, both highs for returning players. |

Hill (6-0, 195), who is 47 catches shy of tying the all-time receptions record set by David Boston at 191, is not the lone receiver to be selected as a captain, with redshirt senior C.J. Saunders also earning the respect from his teammates as a leader of the offense.

Saunders has made his impact off the field more than he has on – Saunders had 10 catches for 73 yards in 2018 – but that does not make his story any less impressive.

For Saunders (5-10, 190), a former walk-on from Dublin (Ohio) Coffman, no one else could have expected him to make enough impact on this Ohio State roster to become a captain. But Saunders said he knew what he was able to bring and that the leadership from a season ago helped to make him strive to be that presence the team needed.

"I think that last year, being with the guys that led before, that led me, I got to go learn from them and see what it's all about to have that impact and be what a captain's all about," Saunders said.

Leadership At H-Back

But leadership can only get a team so far, and the Buckeyes' wide receiving corps looks to have much more than strong locker room presence in 2019. Hill will almost definitely be in the H-back/Slot spot for Ohio State this season, giving new starting quarterback Justin Fields a terrific safety net to work with as a primary target.

Hill has never been known as a wide receiver with loads of speed, but he is known for his terrific hands and route running. There's a reason Hill was selected as a watch-list member for the Biletnikoff Award as one of the top wideouts in the country: He has loads of talent and could be due for a breakout year.

On the same day he announced captains, head coach Ryan Day said he has been implementing Saunders at H-back behind Hill and that Saunders will be used in a variety of situations on the offensive side.

"He's had a good camp," Day said of Saunders. "He's a little bit of a situational guy. He's going to help us on special teams, help us in the pass game a bunch. He's tough. He's got really great short-area quickness, good hands. We're glad we've got him."

Saunders will be in a competition at the "H" with redshirt freshman wide receiver Jaelen Gill, who Day said was "in the mix." Gill was recruited by Ohio State as a running back and was the No. 2 recruit in Ohio in 2018 as a four-star.

Veterans Don't End At Captains

It may have been Hill and Saunders who were voted captains, but there is plenty of experience in the wide receiver room in addition to them. Mainly, the experience comes with the other two wide receivers expected to start: seniors Austin Mack (6-2, 215) and Binjimen Victor (6-4, 199).

Both receivers had 2018 seasons they would like to improve on, with Mack losing the second half of his season to a leg injury, while Victor played in all 14 games but grabbed just 21 passes for 354 yards and four scores.

But the door is open for both of these wideouts to make a much larger impact in 2019, especially if they can remain healthy.

"I went through a lot of adversity, but the cool thing about it is there's another year to prove there's a lot in me to put on the field," Mack said.

Mack understands the importance of stepping up and becoming the leaders and the veteran presence that the offense, specifically at quarterback, needs. After a season like 2018, when Haskins got to work with the fifth-year trio, he knows it is his time to make Fields' time under center as easy as possible as a new face to the team.

"It's huge, especially with a whole new quarterback room that's never been through this culture we have," Mack said. "We have to get them comfortable to be



Binjimen Victor

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ANDREW LIND

RECORD IN SIGHT – After hauling in 70 catches for 885 yards and six touchdowns last season, Ohio State team captain K.J. Hill needs just 48 receptions to break David Boston’s 20-year-old school record of 191 career receptions.

in that pocket or being in that huddle and being able to talk to us. That’s up to us, that’s up to guys that have been here.”

Behind Mack, who still managed 26 grabs for 331 yards, and Victor should be two of Ohio State’s brightest young talents in sophomore Chris Olave and freshman Garrett Wilson, both of whom can be expected to make a large impact in smaller roles.

Olave really started to shine in the second half of the 2018 season, scoring the first two touchdowns against Michigan to start to open up the floodgates in a 62-39 victory. He finished with 12 receptions for 197 yards and three touchdowns and has done enough to gain Hill’s attention as a player to watch.

“Once you get your swag, you’re good, and I feel like Chris got his swagger,” Hill said. “He’s walking around here with his swagger. I feel like he knows he’s going to have a good year this year.”

While Olave (6-1, 185) came more out of nowhere as a three-star prospect, Wilson has incredibly high expectations coming in as a five-star recruit and a walking high-light reel in high school. He showed some of that in the spring game, making an acrobatic touchdown grab that showed truly what he is able to do.

Wilson will likely be an electric player at times this season for the Buckeyes, but don’t expect him to come in and steal a starting spot from one of the seniors. Do, though, expect him to steal more and more time in the lineup the more he adapts to the college game, especially with the way Day has talked about him in practices.

“He’s fighting right now for a backup spot and an opportunity to play,” Day said earlier in fall camp. “If you’re a backup receiver at Ohio State, you’re playing a lot of football with the way we rotate those guys. He’s right there right now. He’s flashed for sure.”

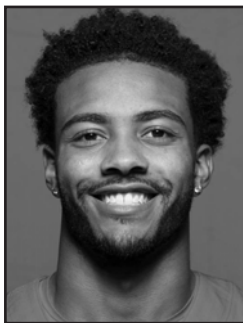
The Rest Of The Group

There is plenty of depth when looking past the main members of this wide receiver group, with plenty more coming in a loaded 2020 class. For now, the Buckeyes will still be without redshirt sophomore Kamryn Babb, who will miss this season with another knee injury.

Jameson Williams may not find time this year but is filled with potential coming in the future, while Sam Wiglusz (5-11, 185), Austin Kutscher (6-0, 200), Chris Booker (6-0, 185) and Ellijah Gardiner (6-4, 205) fill out the roster at the position.

Booker, a junior, joined the football program this season following a strong outing with the Club Football team, where he caught 14 passes for 371 yards and seven touchdowns in four games.

Coming in 2020 is a stacked class from wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, which has four receiver prospects in the top 100. Five-star prospect Julian Fleming is the top highlight, ranking as the top receiver in 2020 and the No. 3 prospect overall, followed by a trio of four-stars in Jaxon Smith-Njigba, who is the No. 10 wide receiver and No. 62 overall, Gee Scott Jr., ranked No. 11 and 63rd overall, and Mookie Cooper, ranked the No. 14 receiver and No. 75 overall.



Jaalen Gill

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Hill Enters Final Season Ready To Be The Guy

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State's 2018 fifth-year receiving corps of Parris Campbell, Terry McLaurin and Johnnie Dixon earned much of the attention a season ago, with the trio combining for 167 catches, 2,433 yards and 31 touchdowns in their final year with the program.

But the success at wide receiver didn't stop there.

In his junior year, K.J. Hill amassed 70 receptions for 885 yards and six touchdowns with Dwayne Haskins as his primary thrower. The reception and yard totals were both second on the team.

Hill could have wrapped up his Ohio State career there, ending on a relatively high note with a 28-23 Rose Bowl win and leaving with the head coach he's always known and the soundest passing quarterback the program has ever had.

But Hill wasn't satisfied.

"I just wanted to do everything I could in my senior year and have no regrets," he said. "If I would have left last year, having thoughts in the back of my head like 'what if I stayed?' – I didn't want any of that," Hill said. "That's what I came back for. I love being a Buckeye. I love Ohio State."

Hill is one of two fifth-year wide receivers on the team, the other being C.J. Saunders, while seniors Austin Mack and Binjimen Victor both come in as fourth-years.

Where Hill separates himself from the

room is his résumé, which includes 94 receptions and 929 yards more than anyone else on the team. If he manages to get 48 receptions this season, he would break David Boston's program record of 191 set in 1998.

While he said the record itself isn't anything to think about, having his name in the same conversation as Boston's is special.

"You just think like, wow, K.J. Hill is now a name people are going to be talking about," he said. "That's one of the reasons why I came back. I want to leave my legacy."

The impressive numbers resulted in a place on the 2019 Biletnikoff watch list as one of the top receivers in the country.

Hill is one of five on the watch list from the Big Ten, with Purdue's Rondale Moore, Minnesota's Tyler Johnson, Penn State's K.J. Hamler and Nebraska's J.D. Spielman also making the list.

For Hill to keep his level of production up this time around, he will have to do it with someone new throwing him the ball. With Haskins gone to the NFL, Fields was announced as the starter over Kentucky transfer Gunnar Hoak and fifth-year senior Chris Chugunov on Aug. 19.

Fields' potential is part of the reason Hill decided to come back for this season in the first place.

"I told (Day) I needed to know what the quarterback situation was," Hill said. "Do I need to leave with Dwayne or if I wanted to

stay would I have a quarterback?"

The addition of Fields – a five-star recruit and the highest-rated recruit in Ohio State history – was exciting enough to bring Hill back.

Even with all of the hype that surrounds Fields, Hill said there is a simple way he can help whoever is behind center, especially an inexperienced quarterback.

"I help the quarterbacks by – you throw it, I catch it," he said. "You just want to get in a rhythm, just catch the ball and move forward, and that's all the quarterback wants to do."

Now, it's just unfinished business for a receiver who is fewer than 50 catches from a program record.

Hill knows what his role is this year. He knows what void is expected to be left with the departures of major figures in the passing game.

"I've got big shoes to fill, not only in the receiver room but as a leader on this team, because I'm an older guy that has seen it all," he said. "I know the standard of the offense. Coach Day always talks about it. We did big things last year so there can't be a drop-off. It's got to be better than last year."

With the decision to stay for his final season at Ohio State, Hill has made himself a leader and will likely be a captain for the offense, and with that come the expectations.

The Buckeyes never lost more than two games in a season during Urban Meyer's

entire tenure, and in Brian Hartline's first year as wide receivers coach, the unit helped Haskins shatter Big Ten records for passing yards and touchdowns in his only season as starter.

Two of those receivers, Campbell and McLaurin, were both selected within the first 80 picks of the NFL draft. Dixon went undrafted but signed with the Houston Texans as a free agent.

Their success a season ago makes the expectations soar for Hill and company, and with four senior receivers in the room, the experience in the room is certainly not lost. Newer faces such as Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave also hope to add a spark to the receivers, combining to make a group that looks more than ready to make up for the lost talent.

Hill is the highest-producing receiver coming back from a group that combined for well over 4,000 yards, and he knows that the pressure will be on him to lead the group for his final year.

There is certainly support behind him, but for the first time, it is on Hill to be the guy, and not just one of the guys. But he's not worried about that expectation. He said he wouldn't have come to this school if he weren't ready for that expectation.

"It's a lot of pressure, but you're at Ohio State," Hill said. "You're going to get everybody's best shot. You've got to be that offense; you've got to be explosive. That's what the fans expect. That's the standard at Ohio State, and if you can't do that at Ohio State, you don't need to be there."



K.J. Hill



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Experienced Tight Ends To See More Snaps in 2019

By JOE DEMPSEY
 Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ohio State tight end unit is the most experienced position group on the team.

Fifth-year senior Rashod Berry (6-4, 255) and junior Luke Farrell (6-6, 250) both started at tight end last season and return as excellent run blockers and serviceable receiving threats.

Berry offers more upside with the ball in his hands and in jump-ball situations, given his solid athleticism, but Farrell is quite athletic himself.

The other primary tight end in offensive coordinator/tight ends coach Kevin Wilson's room is Jeremy Ruckert, a sophomore from Lindenhurst, New York.

Ruckert was the No. 2 tight end in the country for the 2018 recruiting class, according to the 247Sports composite rankings.

After standing out at wide receiver in high school, he tacked on considerable muscle mass to his 6-5 frame, weighing in at 250 pounds after coming in at 237.

The other two scholarship tight ends for the Buckeyes are junior Jake Hausmann (6-4, 245) and true freshman Cormontae Hamilton (6-2, 263), but it is unlikely either will factor into the rotation much with Farrell, Berry and Ruckert ahead of them.



Rashod Berry

"In our day and age, at tight end we're looking for receiving-type players that become tough enough and big enough to block," Wilson said. "And that's what Luke is and Jeremy and Rashod and Jake."

While serving as the primary backup to Marcus Baugh in 2017, Berry posted six receptions for 100 yards and two touchdowns in his first season at tight end after playing defensive end to begin his Buckeye career.

As a junior in 2018, the Lorain, Ohio, native hauled in nine catches for 78 yards and two TDs.

Berry gained a lot of trust from the Ohio State coaching staff last season, evidenced by his critical catch on a fourth-down conversion at Maryland in an 52-51 overtime victory for the Scarlet and Gray.

Farrell led the Ohio State tight ends with 20 catches for 205 yards and one touchdown last season. While Ruckert tallied only one reception for 13 yards, he is expected to be a weapon in the passing attack this fall.

Given the talented and experienced returners at tight end, Wilson said the offensive staff has experimented with putting two or three tight ends on the field at once.

"They're a strength because we've got everybody back," Wilson said. "They've had a good offseason. There is a place for that, for sure. And then what happens is you end up not only competing by your position group, but you end up competing by personnel groupings."

Competition for playing time will be stiff among the tight ends, but using more than one at a time will allow the athletic group to see the field more.

Wilson even mentioned sliding Ruckert out to the H-back position to take advan-

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Farrell led Ohio State's tight ends with 20 catches and 205 yards last season, while also hauling in a touchdown.

tage of his receiving ability and his blocking, which impressed his coach during the offseason.

"He's getting a little bit more confident and mature and tough in the run game," Wilson said of Ruckert's improvement over the spring and during fall camp. "When you're an athletic player and you're young and not as strong as you need to be, if you're thinking about what you need to do, you don't create enough power to block. One of his ways of creating power is he's a good athlete so it's running, it's movement.

"As he gains momentum, he's a better blocker. But when you're thinking and you're hesitant, you don't gain momentum. When you're not overpowering because you're a young player and you've played receiver, you're not as strong as you need to be.

"The more confident he has become as a blocker, he runs off the ball more so he creates more power and plays with better leverage so he's a more competent blocker. (Ruckert's) always been a good receiver, but he's a more competent blocker and he's doing a great job."

Wilson's reasoning for using multiple tight ends stems from the idea of having the most talented offensive players on the field at all times. Since the team had standout receivers Parris Campbell, Terry McLaurin and Johnnie Dixon a season ago, it made more sense to fill the field with wideouts rather than tight ends. But since those three have since moved on to the NFL and the entire tight end room returned, it could present more opportunities for the veteran group.

Fifth-year senior Derrick Malone (6-5, 245) and Brock Davin (6-3, 240), a senior with junior eligibility, also provide more depth at tight end and will compete for roles on special teams.

It is well-documented that the tight ends were not featured much during Urban Meyer's tenure in Columbus.

However, this season marks the first year of the Ryan Day era, so how much the tight ends will be used may vary from recent years.

Regardless, the tight ends will be ready.

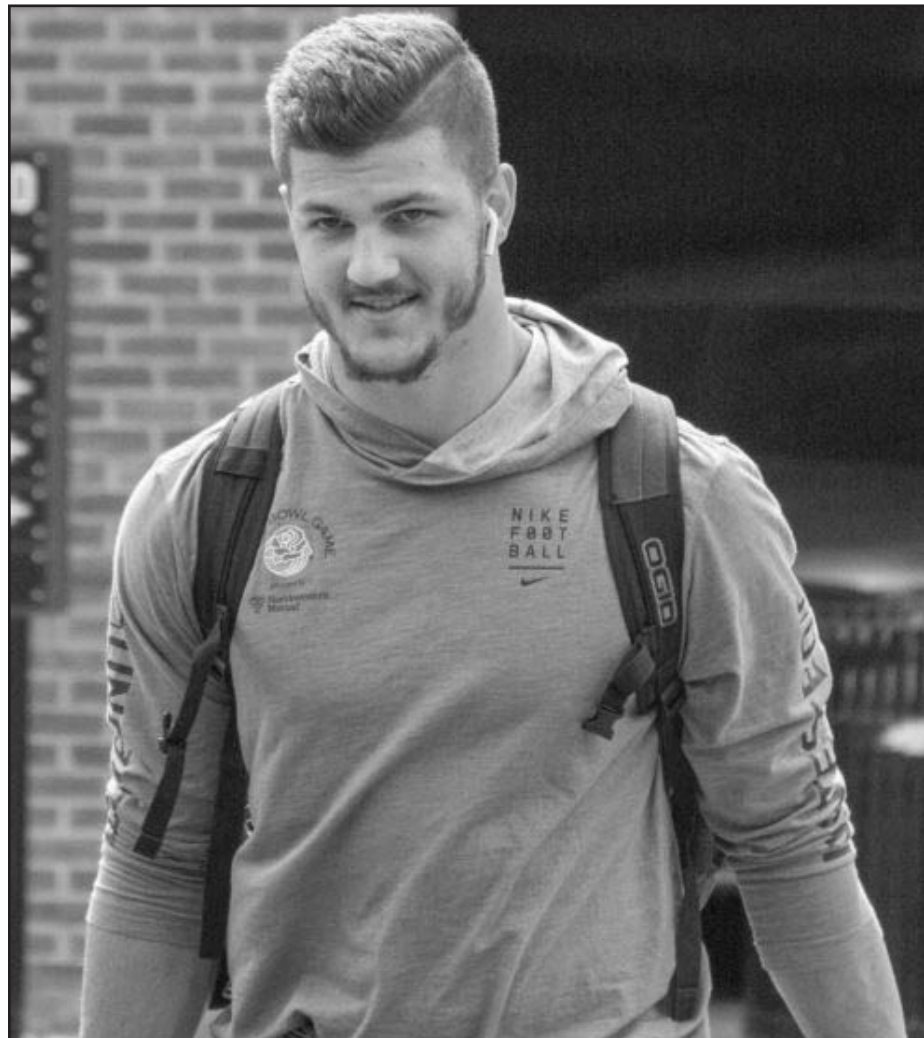
"As a group we need to step up this year," Farrell said. "We've got four guys who have had some experience coming back, older guys, and Rucks is only a second-year but he's been doing really well. Being able to play as a group is really important.

"We all have to improve across the board on everything and also building that trust with the coaches and quarterbacks that they count on us being out there, whether it's one or two tight ends."



ANDREW LIND

MORE INVOLVED – Ohio State did not target the tight ends much under former head coach Urban Meyer, but junior Luke Farrell (above left) and sophomore Jeremy Ruckert (below) figured to be a prominent part of the Buckeyes' offensive scheme under Ryan Day's leadership.



Ohio State Familiar To Graduate Transfer Jackson

By **CRAIG MERZ**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

In Jonah Jackson's four seasons at Rutgers, the Scarlet Knights won 11 of 48 games. During the same period, Ohio State had 48 wins and six losses. To say Jackson went from one extreme to another when the graduate transfer left guard decided to join the Buckeyes is an understatement.

"Guys have a mentality of winning," Jackson said following the Buckeyes' Aug. 8 practice. "You see all the championships and champions. Guys don't take that for granted here. We go as hard as we possibly can because that's the goal every year. Nothing short of that."

As much as the culture of winning is different than at his previous school, Jackson (6-4, 305) felt immediately comfortable in his new program because of past relationships. His head coach the past three seasons at Rutgers was Chris Ash, the former OSU co-defensive coordinator who took several Ohio State staff members to Piscataway, N.J.

Among them was Drew Mehringer, who spent 2016 as Rutgers' offensive coordinator before leaving for the Texas Longhorns. Mehringer was a graduate assistant under former OSU head coach Urban Meyer in 2012 and '13.

"The transition from Rutgers to here, we don't do much different since Coach Ash got his philosophies from Coach Meyer and brought what they do here to there," Jackson said, "whether it's the weight room, academics and then the football aspect."

"I was almost under the same system my redshirt freshman year when Coach Mehringer was the offensive coordinator."

Also, Rutgers strength and conditioning coach Kenny Parker was an assistant to Mickey Marotti, OSU's assistant athletic director for football sports performance, for four years.

"I was definitely ready when I came here," Jackson said.

The Buckeyes are happy to have the former

three-star recruit from Media, Pa. OSU has one returning starter on the offensive line in senior left tackle Thayer Munford, who underwent back surgery in January and is easing his way back into the first-team position that is being held for him.

Jackson was an honorable mention All-Big Ten selection by the media and coaches in 2018 when he started 11 of 12 games at right guard.

"He's had a seamless transition," said third-year sophomore offensive lineman Wyatt Davis. "You would have thought that he would have been here all four years the way he came in. He had really minimal questions about stuff, and as soon as we got on the field, you could see why he was the top grad transfer coming out."



Jonah Jackson

Jackson said he enjoyed his time at Rutgers but was looking for a new challenge. His decision came down to Ohio State or Oklahoma. It was quite different from when he had one Power 5 school interested in him coming out of Penncrest High School.

"Rutgers was my first Division IA offer so I was like, 'Wow, I'm going to run with it,'" he said.

This time he was in demand, and he said he recently looked at his texts and realized he had 308 unread messages.

"It was just like a hailstorm at me," Jackson said. "I was like, I know where I want to go, I know the schools that get to visit and get it done, and it was kind of a headache, the amount of people that were just blowing up your phone at times."

He chose Ohio State without a promise of playing time.

"They told it was going to be a fight," he said. "When you come to a place like Ohio State, everybody is ready to roll. It's the cream of the crop."

He left Rutgers with a criminal justice degree and could have given the NFL a try but instead hopes to improve his stock at a high-profile program.

"That's something that will happen down the road," he said. "If that happens, it happens, God willing. But if it doesn't, I'm ready to play football

for the Ohio State Buckeyes. I'm not worried about the NFL right now."

He was a captain last season and said he is not afraid to be vocal with his new teammates, although he chooses his spots.

"There are times when you have to sit back and let the other guys have their due diligence and handle things, but there are times you have to help a young guy out," he said. "I feel comfortable from my past where I had a leadership role with my former team."

Third-year sophomore center Josh Myers welcomes any advice from Jackson.

"He plays like a veteran," Myers said. "He sees things. When you're playing with a young guy who hasn't had the experience or maybe doesn't have the offense down that great, they'll miss little things. And that's what gets you beat is the little things. And Jonah doesn't miss those, and that's kind of how you can tell that he's played a lot."

Whether it's offering feedback to a teammate or jibing an opponent, Jackson loves to have fun.

"Since I'm a fifth-year guy, I feel like I bring

a veteran aspect and knowledge of the game," he said. "I just bring some energy. You always have to give a good vibe. Your energy is a direct reflection of your line. And then some nastiness and grit, that's something I like to pride myself on and definitely bring it to the table."

"When we're on the field, we're going to handle our business. And then when we're off, we're going to have a good time, laugh and joke around."

Offensive line coach Greg Studrawa said Jackson's personality is starting to emerge.

"Obviously, he's a new guy and the rest of the guys are getting to know him," Studrawa said. "But he's a professional. He does his job and goes hard every play that he's in there. He's starting to lead by example."

As much as Jackson looks forward to his first game as a Buckeye on Aug. 31 vs. Florida Atlantic, he's likely got Nov. 16 noted when Ohio State plays at Rutgers.

"I gave everything to the university, and that will forever be my alma mater," he said. "That's a place I'll consider home, and this will also be considered home."

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New-Look Offensive Line Will Set The Table

By JAMES GREGA
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Any football coach at any level will tell you that any successful offense begins and ends with a stellar offensive line. Ohio State's front five could be just as crucial to the success of first-year head coach Ryan Day as any unit on the team due to the Buckeyes' inexperience within the unit.

The Buckeyes need to replace the likes of Isaiah Prince, Michael Jordan, Malcolm Pridgeon and Demetrius Knox, all of whom were participating in NFL preseason at the time of publication.

Thayer Munford and Wyatt Davis return as the only linemen with meaningful playing time in 2018. Munford, who played sparingly as a freshman in 2017, started every game at left tackle for Ohio State last year while Davis was thrust into game action late in the season, starting the Big Ten title game and Rose Bowl after Knox was injured against Michigan.

Offensive line coach Greg Studrawa was one of many holdovers on the offensive coaching staff for Ryan Day, and Studrawa is confident in his current group heading into 2019 despite the lack of experience.

"I want them to feel like they have to do their job right now," he said. "Become the best at doing your job, and when you do that, then you start performing. As it goes on, those leaderships will come. I'm just focused on them doing their job, doing what they have to do to get better every day and work hard in practice, and that's what they've been doing."

Projected Starters

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Left Tackle 75 • Thayer Munford 6-6 • 310 • Jr. Massillon (Ohio) Washington The lone returning starter on the offensive line, starting 13 games last season. | Center 71 • Josh Myers 6-5 • 310 • So. Miamisburg (Ohio) Backed up All-American center Michael Jordan last season. | Right Tackle 76 • Branden Bowen 6-7 • 315 • 5th Draper (Utah) Corner Canyon Missed the 2018 season while rehabilitating a leg injury that occurred halfway through 2017. |
| Left Guard 73 • Jonah Jackson 6-4 • 305 • 5th Media, Pa. Honorable mention All-Big Ten last season at Rutgers, where he started 11 games. | Right Guard 52 • Wyatt Davis 6-4 • 313 • So. Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco Started the Rose Bowl win over Washington in place of the injured Demetrius Knox. | |

Bookends On Line

Perhaps the position that Ohio State has solidified the most on the front line is the two tackle positions. Assuming he is healthy, Munford will likely return to blocking the blind side for the Buckeyes in 2019. Munford underwent offseason back surgery, and the coaching staff has been easing him back into the rotation up front.

"I think he's done really good with his weight," Studrawa said of Munford (6-6, 310). "He looks like a million bucks. And that's going to take some of the stress off his back. We're limiting him until he gets back into the swing of things, but Thayer looks really good."

In 2018, Munford was named All-Big Ten Honorable Mention by the coaches but missed the Rose Bowl against

Washington with the back injury. His backup, Joshua Alabi (6-5, 305), started the Rose Bowl victory and has been taking a majority of the reps in fall camp with Munford easing back in. Should Munford suffer a setback or his progress slow, Alabi would be the easy choice to replace Munford up front.

At the other tackle position, Nicolas Petit-Frere and Branden Bowen were battling it out for the right to start week one for Ohio State as of press time.

A redshirt freshman, Petit-Frere was the No. 1 overall offensive tackle prospect coming out of high school, but concerns about his weight – or lack thereof – forced him to take a redshirt year in 2018. Now up to 295 pounds on his 6-5 frame, the Tampa, Fla., native is fighting to take hold of a position that could be his for the next few years.

"That was the thing last year," Studrawa said of Petit-Frere. "We had to get his weight up. That was a bit of a struggle at times to get him up to where he needed to be. He's there now. Every

single lift he had in the weight room with Mick (Marotti) is up 20 to 25 pounds. So he's big and strong and physical now. He's had the time to learn the position, and now he's starting to take off."

Bowen on the other hand, is a fifth-year senior who has played multiple positions along the Ohio State front line in his career. He started the first six games of the year in 2017 before a severe leg injury cut him down for the rest of that season and all of 2018. After being granted a medical redshirt, Bowen (6-7, 315) is back in 2019 for one last chance to become a starter for the Buckeyes.

"In the week before practice started, I was sitting at home thinking, 'Man, this is it. I've got to go now. I don't have a choice.' I have to play now or look past football," Bowen said. "I had to make that choice to come in and compete for a starting job and just keep pushing for it."

Men in the Middle

Where Ohio State seems to be set at tackle, there are still some question

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FOOTBALL PREVIEW: OFFENSIVE LINE

marks in the middle of the Buckeye offensive line.

Davis returns with two games of starting experience and appears locked in to start at guard. He has become a favorite of his position coach, who joked that he would trust Davis (6-4, 313) to be with him in a bar fight if needed.

"I love the kid," Studrawa said. "If I had my car parked and I was walking out of the bar late, I'd be like, 'Wyatt, are you here?' Then I'd go get in my car. That's how much I think of him. He is a fighter. He is a technician. He is a perfectionist. He wants to do it perfect, and if he doesn't – he drove a guy 6 yards the other day and turned around and said, 'Coach, I don't like that.' You love to coach those kids because they love the game of football."

Expected to join Davis in the middle is Josh Myers. A former five-star prospect from Miamisburg, Ohio, Myers (6-5, 310) is likely to start at center for the Buckeyes, replacing three-year starter Jordan, who is now with the Cincinnati Bengals.

After redshirting in 2017, Myers was the primary backup center in 2018 and appears poised to anchor the Buckeye line for the next few seasons.

"Josh Myers is becoming a great player, working his tail off," Studrawa said. "His attention to detail is unbelievable. He's becoming exactly what I thought he would be."

At the other guard, multiple players are vying for the spot. However, Jonah Jackson, a graduate transfer from Rutgers, seems to be the favorite in the clubhouse. Since arriving on campus, Jackson has made an immediate posi-

itive impression on the coaches and his teammates and with his experience as a starter in the Big Ten, he figures to be a factor right away for the Buckeyes.

"I feel like I bring a little more veteran aspect to it and knowledge of the game," Jackson (6-4, 305) said. "But Coach Stud has all these dudes greased up, ready to go. But I just bring some energy."

Competing for jobs on the interior of the line are junior Gavin Cupp (6-4, 308) and freshmen Harry Miller (6-4, 310), Enokk Vimahi (6-4, 270) and Matthew Jones (6-4, 305). Cupp, a veteran in Studrawa's group, has been competing for reps at center and guard. However, Studrawa's hope is that Miller can solidify the No. 2 center job by the end of camp.

"I'm hoping by the time we get that first game, 'Hey, Harry's the backup coach,' if something happens or Josh gets hurt. 'Get out and get in there,' and the kid can do it," Studrawa said.

The Waiting Game

Following the departure of so many veterans, Ohio State needed to reload up front, and it did.

The Buckeyes signed a plethora of linemen in the class of 2019, but while talented, many are not expected to compete for starting jobs. That said, multiple backup jobs are up for grabs, and the young Bucks are in the middle of those battles.

Freshmen Ryan Jacoby (6-5, 290), Jones and Vimahi are all in contention to back up the likes of Jackson at guard while Cupp continues to push for time as well. Jones is also in contention for the backup center spot, even though Miller

is the likely favorite.

At right tackle, Dawand Jones (6-8, 360) is a clear No. 3 behind Bowen and Petit-Frere while Max Wray (6-6, 300) attempts to fight off veteran Kevin Woidke (6-6, 305) for the third spot at left tackle.

Walk-ons Nathan Brock (6-4, 290), Jack Jamieson (6-1, 285), Chris Kuhn (6-5, 270), Brandon Pahl (6-2, 299), Ryan Smith (6-3, 270) and Zach Stevenson

(6-3, 275) round out Studrawa's unit. The depth of his position group, while young, gives Studrawa faith that one day soon, the Buckeyes will have plenty of flexibility up front without having to worry about any potential weak spots.

"You're a lot more wide open," he said. "You don't have to have a different plan when a guy comes in. 'Hey, we've got a tackle in, you've got to protect this.' We're not going to have to do that."



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Defense Has Plenty To Prove To New Coaches

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Greg Mattison wasn't in Columbus last season, save for a forgettable afternoon in November for him, so he didn't hear all the local talk about how historically bad the Ohio State defense was in 2018.

However, he became aware of the chatter the moment he switched from maize and blue to scarlet and gray in January when he became the Buckeyes' co-defensive coordinator after eight seasons with Michigan, the past four as the defensive line coach.

The Buckeyes allowed a school-record 357 points, and their 25.5 points allowed per game was tied for 51st in the country. They were tied for 71st nationally in total defense (403.4 yards per game), 86th in pass defense (245.2) and 56th in rush defense (158.2).

Purdue racked up 539 total yards and 49 points, and Maryland posted 535 yards and 51 points. Even Michigan scored big in a 62-39 loss to the Buckeyes.

With Ryan Day taking over as head coach for Urban Meyer on Jan. 2, he set about cleaning house, and within a month co-defensive coordinator Alex Grinch was replaced by Jeff Hafley (also the secondary coach), Greg Schiano left and Mattison took his spot, Al Washington replaced linebackers coach Bill Davis, and Matt Barnes became special teams coordinator and assistant secondary coach with the departure of Taver Johnson.

The only holdover on the defense was line coach Larry Johnson, who was promoted to associate head coach.

Even with the changes, the defensive personnel must be, well, defensive when asked about the 2018 season.

"Let's face it, stats are stats," Mattison said Aug. 14. "You know, the only stat that I really, really bought – that I ever really look, really, really closely at – are points, you know, giving up points. That's



TIM MOODY

NEW MAN IN CHARGE – Co-defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff Hafley came to Columbus following a seven-year stint in the NFL coaching defensive backs for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Cleveland Browns and San Francisco 49ers.

the bottom line. I didn't even look at what it was last year. It doesn't matter to me.

"The thing that I know what we are going to do is we are going to be an aggressive defense that runs to the football, and everybody on our defense believes in that, and that's why I'm so proud of these kids right now."

He also reminded critics that the Buckeyes had a pretty good record last season.

"Somebody said something to me one time," Mattison said, "and I said, 'Guys, they are 13-1.' 13-1. There's a lot of places in the country that would like to raise

their hand and say, 'We are 13-1.'"

Graduate defensive tackle Jashon Cornell was one of the long line of players to be asked if the defense had something to prove in 2019.

"You're Ohio State," he said. "You always have something to prove."

Fair point, but the criticism was warranted considering OSU allowed a staggering 23 plays of 40 or more yards last season.

To that end, the new staff has made some changes starting with reducing the number of schemes as well as emphasizing getting after the ball.

"We're playing aggressive. We're playing really aggressive," senior defensive end and co-captain Jonathon Cooper said. "We have something to prove. We have a chip on our shoulder every single day. We come out with a tremendous effort and get after it. That just goes to show the difference from this year to last year."

Or as senior linebacker Malik Harrison put it, "I like it because it's more simple. It's just having us play hard, play fast. It's more just click on, see ball, get ball. The thing that excites me is it allows us to play, not too many complicated things going on."

While Mattison said the base defense remains a 4-3 (four linemen, three linebackers) a wrinkle is the "Bullet" position, which is a hybrid of an outside linebacker and defensive back. The Bullet, most likely junior safety Brendon White, can interchange with the strongside (Sam) linebacker, probably junior Pete Werner.

"The bullet position is a position (for) when teams want to try to spread you out and use a very, very athletic tight end to get a mismatch on what for most people would be a big, strong Sam linebacker," Mattison said.

Day liked what he had seen of the

defense through two scrimmages and more than a dozen practices.

"We are running to the ball, we're creating turnovers," he said on Aug. 19. "The secondary is playing with energy. The defensive line is penetrating. I can feel that. They're playing with great energy."

For all its shortcomings last season, the defense should be a strength considering there are nine returning starters with defensive ends Cooper and junior Chase Young; fifth-year senior defensive tackle Robert Landers; linebackers Harrison, Werner and junior Tuf Borland; safeties White and senior Jordan Fuller; and fifth-year senior cornerback Damon Arnette.

"We are very, very talented," Mattison said. "Sometimes when you have a very, very talented team, you, as a coach, say, 'Go.' You don't try to invent things. You don't try to make it too complicated. What you try to do is say, let you guys go play. I happen to think this defense has that."

First Line Of Defense

Defensive end Nick Bosa is gone, having been taken second overall by the San Francisco 49ers in the 2019 NFL draft. But again, he wasn't around after a season-ending injury in the third game vs. TCU last season.

The Buckeyes had to fill the gap, so to speak, and Young figures to be the next great DE following Bosa and his brother, Joey (No. 4 pick to the Chargers in 2016).

Young showed flashes of brilliance but was hampered by ankle injuries throughout last season. He had 34 total tackles (25 solo), 15½ tackles for loss – including 10½ sacks – for minus-86 yards and two forced fumbles.

"He's a leader." Day said. "He's the voice of our defense right now. That's what I feel. That's what I see."

Young understands he is not a fin-

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"I'm just looking to improve my game," he said. "That's what the whole D line is doing right now. We're on the verge of trying to be the best in the country."

Mattison hasn't known Young long but likes what he sees.

"Chase Young is an outstanding person, athlete and football player," he said.

Cooper, as a co-captain, provides experience and leadership. He had 14 unassisted tackles among his 25 last season and had 2½ sacks.

The backups are young but talented, of course, and include sophomores Tyreke Smith and Tyler Friday, second-year freshman Javontae Jean-Baptiste and true freshman Zach Harrison.

"Tyreke Smith is going to be a wicked guy coming off the edge," Young said. "A lot of people don't know about him."

Landers and Cornell hold the defensive tackle spots, but it won't be easy replacing Dre'Mont Jones, who as a senior last season was named a first-team All-American by College Football News for his 43 total tackles, including 13½ TFLs and 8½ sacks.

Cornell will give it a go after being on the edge last season.

"When I was at defensive end, I didn't feel as comfortable in the pass because I was switching back and forth from positions," he said. "When I'm at three-technique I feel at home."

The Buckeyes are deep at the tackles starting with senior Davon Hamilton, who split starts with Landers last season. Graduate transfer Antwuan Jackson played at Blinn Junior College after originally attending Auburn in 2016 but red-shirted his freshman season.

He is expected to spell Hamilton and sophomore Tommy Toggiai.

"Right now, my job is to come in after Davon or Tommy at nose guard or 3-technique, just come in play as hard as I can and do what I can to help the team," Jackson said.

Day said that he expects to use rotation for his defensive interior because of the progress made by junior Haskell Garrett, redshirt sophomore Jerron Cage and sophomore Taron Vincent.

Backing The 'Backers

The linebacker corps of Borland, Harrison and Werner came under intense criticism for not being up to standards last season, although it should be noted all were in their first year as full-time starters.

They played like it at times with over-eagerness that left gaps, poor reads and what seemed like less pure skills than previous linebackers.

Yet Mattison believes in the trio, and it's likely they'll be trotting out with the

ones when the Buckeyes open the season Aug. 31 vs. Florida Atlantic. Harrison has 39 games under his belt and should be secure at his position.

"We don't really talk about last year," he said. "Most of the time we're just telling everybody to go hard. We have a lot to prove. We want to be the No. 1 defense in the country."

Mattison has gone to bat for Borland, who was not at 100 percent last season after an Achilles tendon injury.

"I like everything about Tuf Borland's game," he said. "Borland is another one that comes out to practice every day, extremely intelligent. He takes great pride in getting the front lined up."

Werner was praised as well.

"I really believe he is a top guy at his position," Mattison said. "I've had the opportunity to see a lot of pretty good football players, and I am really impressed with him. He plays extremely hard. He's very physical. He's got great size and strength, and he can run, and he's got unbelievable character."

Everyone who has earned playing time has a chance to get it, Mattison said.

"With the tempo we're going to see, with the way teams are going to try to attack us, we'd better have a first starter or a second starter and a third starter," he said.

Players such as junior Baron Browning; sophomores Dallas Gant, Teradja Mitchell and K'Vaughan Pope; and true freshmen Cade Stover and Craig Young are in the running.

Backs To The Wall

Even the maligned linebackers got off easy compared to the scorn thrown the way of cornerbacks and safeties. Naturally, the scorn was wide open. That's how it went for the secondary that was not looking for the ball and always a step behind.

Enter Hafley, who spent the past three of his seven years in the NFL with the 49ers.

"His expertise in the back end, he's as good a secondary coach as I've ever seen, and I know the players would say that," Mattison said.

Junior cornerback Jeff Okudah said Hafley's knowledge and enthusiasm are contagious.

"Things the offense does and things that would pass through last year, guys are stepping up and identifying like splits or formations and everyone's player condition is just flying through the roof so we're playing faster," he said.

Arnette, who had 40 tackles, an interception and six pass breakups last season, could have turned pro but he agreed with the staff's assessment that he wasn't ready.

"I see someone who's fired up, ready to go," Okudah, who could start at the opposite corner, said of Arnette.

Sophomores Sevyn Banks and Marcus Williamson are among the corners vying for playing time.

Fuller will get the nod at one safety spot. He tied Malik Harrison for the team lead with 81 tackles last season. Third-year sophomore Shaun Wade, who had a

team-high three interceptions, is expected to be the other starter, although White as the Bullet is also part of the group and will be on the field a lot. Junior Jahsen Wint is also a Bullet candidate.

Hafley added more zone coverage to the mix in order create turnovers. OSU tied for 59th last season with 11 picks.

"Zone gives you a lot of chances to make plays on the ball," Okudah said.



ANDREW LIND

SOON-TO-BE FIRST-ROUND DRAFT PICK – Defensive end Chase Young enters his junior season with high expectations after being named to the AP Preseason All-American team and numerous watch lists.



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Defensive Line Remains Strength For Buckeyes

By JAMES GREGA
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

When Ryan Day was putting together his coaching staff for his first full season as head coach, it was evident there was one position coach he had to keep, and that was Larry Johnson.

Although he cleaned out the rest of the defensive staff, keeping Johnson around might have been the easiest choice for Day when retooling his staff. Hired in 2014 by Urban Meyer, Johnson produced the Big Ten Defensive Lineman of the Year each of his first four seasons (Joey Bosa 2014-2015, Tyquan Lewis 2016, Nick Bosa 2017) after coming over from Penn State, where he coached for 17 years.

Not only did Day keep Johnson around to coach the defensive line, he also promoted him to associate head coach, a move that Day said in February was important for him to make.

"Larry has been great for me," Day said in February. "He was great for me in the summer. He's been great for me the last couple months. He's a guy that everybody respects. Obviously the defensive line is the heart and soul. Anytime you want to be a championship team, if you don't win the line of scrimmage, that's not going to happen.

"More importantly you have to win the locker room," he added. "The defensive line is a big part of that - what he's recruited to the defensive line, how those

guys feel about it. More than that, he's a father figure to everybody on the team. That was important in making him the associate head coach."

As Johnson prepares for his sixth season as the Buckeyes' defensive line coach, he returns a unit that is once again the strength of the team. Despite the departures of Nick Bosa and Dre'Mont Jones to the NFL, Ohio State is once again loaded up front, starting with the man many believe could be the first overall pick in the 2020 NFL draft.

Big Man On Campus

From the moment he stepped on campus, it was clear that Chase Young (6-5, 265) was going to make an immediate impact on the Ohio State defense.

As a freshman in 2017, Young was tied for fourth on the team in sacks (3½) and fifth in tackles for loss (six). Last season, his first as a starter, Young exploded onto the national scene recording 10½ sacks, which led the team and was tied for first in the Big Ten. He also recorded 15½ tackles for loss, which also led the team. For his efforts, he was named Second-Team All-Big Ten by the coaches after picking up the slack when Nick Bosa went down with an injury against TCU in the third game of the year.

Entering his junior season, which is widely expected to be his last in college, Young has taken on a larger leadership role heading into 2019, according to Day.

"He's a leader, gets up in front of the

Projected Starters

| End | End |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 • Chase Young | 18 • Jonathon Cooper |
| 6-5 • 265 • Jr. | 6-4 • 257 • Sr. |
| Upper Malboro, Md. | Gahanna, Ohio |
| Recorded 33 tackles, 15½ tackles for a loss and 10½ sacks last season. | Totaled 25 tackles, 6½ tackles for a loss and 2½ sacks for the Buckeyes in 2018. |
| Nose Guard | Tackle |
| 53 • Davon Hamilton | 9 • Jashon Cornell |
| 6-4 • 310 • 5th | 6-3 • 285 • 5th |
| Pickerington (Ohio) Central | St. Paul (Minn.) Cretin-Derham Hall |
| Started three games last season, recording 16 tackles and 3½ tackles for a loss. | Earned his first career start in the win over Minnesota last season. |

team, talks to the team, it feels like almost every other practice," Day said of Young, who was named one of the team's captains. "He's the voice of our defense right now. That's what I feel. That's what I see. I see a guy who is practicing really, really hard and has a really mature approach, and he's shown a lot of leadership."

The Ohio Connection

While national recruiting has been a trend for Ohio State since Meyer took over the program in 2012, the defensive line features a number of Ohio natives who have played and will continue to play a vital role for the Buckeyes in 2019. The first man on that list is the heart and soul of the defensive line and a product of Huber Heights High School, the same school that produced Braxton Miller.

Despite being undersized for his position (6-1, 285), Robert Landers has become a staple along Ohio State's front line defensively.

He has played in 13 games in each of his seasons and enters his senior campaign with 17½ career tackles for loss. While his numbers per season don't necessarily jump off the page, his productivity in the trenches is unquestioned by those who have watched him play.

Known by his teammates for his goofy antics in the locker room, there is no denying his talent when he steps onto the field for Ohio State, especially when he is healthy. Landers dealt with multiple injuries in 2018 but appears to be healthy and ready to make an impact in his final collegiate season.

"He's great. He's a character," said Ohio State senior defensive end Jonathon Cooper. "But he goes extremely hard, and he's a leader. I rely on him for a lot of things. He is like an older brother to me. It's fun playing with him."

Perhaps sometimes lost in the shuffle of talent Johnson has produced over the years in Columbus is defensive tackle Davon Hamilton (6-4, 310). A native of Pickerington, Ohio, Hamilton has quietly developed into one of the most reliable players along the Buckeye front.

He enters his senior season having played in 40 career games after redshirting in 2015, recording 10½ tackles for loss and pouncing on a pair of fumbles, one for a touchdown against TCU last season.

Day was quick to compliment Hamilton for his work ethic off the field as he heads into his final season as a Buckeye.

"The one guy who I think has had a tremendous offseason and we're looking for big things from is Davon Hamilton," Day said. "He's really changed his body and had a great offseason. I think he has a chance to change the line of scrimmage for us up front."

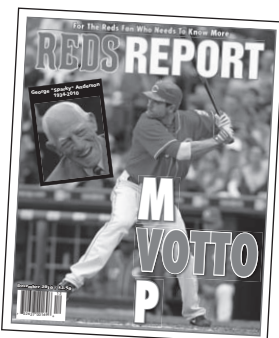
Next is Gahanna, Ohio native Cooper, who enters his final year in Columbus after sitting behind the likes of Nick Bosa, Sam Hubbard, Lewis and Young for the majority of his career.

Unlike Landers and Hamilton, Cooper (6-4, 257) did not use a redshirt year and immediately earned playing time in 2016 as a true freshman. Though he played in just six games that season, he flashed signs of potential but was unable to crack

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FOOTBALL PREVIEW: DEFENSIVE LINE

the rotation up front.

His playing time increased in 2017, as he appeared in all 14 games, collecting a pair of sacks and 15 total tackles. His numbers in 2018 were once again improved. He notched 25 stops and 2½ sacks in 13 games played.

After playing his high school ball just down the road, Cooper admitted that having to wait his turn to shine hasn't always been easy, but he is finally ready to take center stage on Ohio State's defensive front.

"You don't want to just go through the program as a player, you come in and you're forgotten about," he explained. "You want to leave a legacy here, and that's what I want to do. That's what I've been working towards, and I feel like that I'm really going to do with all the work I've put in this year just getting better as a player."

Other Ohio natives on scholarship in Johnson's unit include sophomores Tyreke Smith (6-4, 267, Cleveland Heights) and Jerron Cage (6-2, 295, Cincinnati Winton Woods) and freshmen Noah Potter (6-6, 252, Mentor) and Zach Harrison (6-6, 255, Lewis Center Olentangy Orange). Potter and Harrison come into a crowded unit but enter with plenty of hype. Potter will wear No. 97 for Ohio State, a number that

has been occupied by a Bosa brother since 2013, and Harrison was rated the No. 1 overall prospect in the state of Ohio by 247sports in the class of 2019.

Adding Depth

Easily the deepest unit on the roster, Ohio State has no shortage of talent at any of the positions along the defensive line.

On the interior, Jashon Cornell (6-3, 285), Taron Vincent (6-2, 293) and Tommy Togiai (6-2, 300) figure to play starters' reps for the Buckeyes after they played critical roles backing up the likes of Jones and Landers last season.

Combined, the trio accounted for five tackles for loss in 2018 and two sacks. This year, with Jones playing in the NFL with the Denver Broncos, the window is open for more reps inside.

Also fighting for playing time in the middle are Haskell Garrett (6-2, 295) and Antwan Jackson (6-2, 299). A junior, Garrett was once a four-star prospect coming out of high school in Las Vegas, where he was teammates with former OSU quarterback Tate Martell. Despite being highly recruited, Garrett has played only sparingly in his first two years with the Buckeyes. He has accumulated just

10 tackles in 22 games played over two seasons and has yet to make a stop behind the line of scrimmage.

Jackson, once the No. 1-rated junior college player in the country, enrolled at Ohio State in the spring of 2018 but played in just three games for the Buckeyes last season. Now a graduate senior, Jackson is in his final year of eligibility as he tries to finally crack the rotation, something Cooper believes he is capable of doing.

"I've seen a lot of growth in Antwan," Cooper said. "He's playing really well. He's finally getting down to technique. Good get-off, good hands. He came here, he was a great pass rusher, obviously. He looks great. He got slimmer, more fast and quicker. I think he's going to help us a lot this year."

The Other Guys

Defensive ends Tyler Friday (6-3, 260) and Javonte Jean-Baptiste (6-5, 245) round out the scholarship players in this preview. A true sophomore, Friday appeared in nine games last season and accumulated three tackles and a sack. He has been compared by his coach and others to Lewis, who is now playing for the Indianapolis Colts.

"When I first got the chance to talk to

him, I just loved his intensity," Friday said of Lewis. "And his body frame is a lot similar to mine, as well. So, watching his tape, talking to him whenever I can is something I really take advantage of."

Jean-Baptiste redshirted the 2018 season after coming to Ohio State as a four-star prospect from New Jersey.

Redshirt freshman Alex Williams (6-6, 270) and walk-ons Brett Novick (6-1, 275), Zaid Hamdan (5-11, 260) and Jaden McKenzie (6-3, 285) round out Johnson's unit for 2019.

Johnson, who has had to deal with rumors of impending retirement in recent years, said he is very excited about his group this season, adding it is perhaps the most athletic unit he has ever coached.

"I think this is probably not only the fastest group I've coached on the inside, they all can run five flat better, and I think that's unheard of for a guy 300 pounds. Davon Hamilton can run a five flat and he's 6-4, 310 (pounds)," he said. "That's uncommon for a guy to be able to do that. So we're really quick. We can run to the football, and I think that's the thing that separates this group – as a group that can run really well – and that's the thing I'm really excited about."

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Cooper Strives For Greatness In Final Season



ANDREW LIND

MAKING THE MOST OF HIS FINAL SEASON – Ohio State defensive end Jonathon Cooper — a former five-star recruit out of Gahanna, Ohio, who has recorded 46 tackles, 10½ tackles for loss and 5½ sacks in 33 career games — was named a team captain by his peers on Aug. 19.

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Jonathon Cooper came to Ohio State with high expectations as a highly touted recruit and will strive to realize his potential as a senior.

The defensive end who was the No. 33 overall prospect in the nation joined the Buckeyes from nearby Gahanna Lincoln High School. He earned first-team All-Ohio honors as well as USA Today's state defensive player of the year accolades.

While competing for playing time within an elite defensive end unit which featured Tyquan Lewis, Sam Hubbard, Jalyn Holmes, Nick Bosa and Chase Young, Cooper has recorded 10½ tackles for loss and 5½ sacks in 33 career games. His statistics are underwhelming for such a sought-after recruit, but the best of Cooper may have yet to be seen.

"My career so far has been good, but I know I can bring a lot more to the table," Cooper said. "I know I can be a much better player than I've shown, and I've taken the necessary steps to do that. I've worked extremely hard to improve my game, and I'm pretty sure this season I will show not only myself, but my teammates and my Rushmen the player I'm supposed to be."

As a sophomore in 2017, Cooper posted 15 tackles (11 solo), three tackles for loss, two sacks, one quarterback hurry and one fumble recovery. Rated a five-star recruit by 247Sports, Cooper never let his high ratings get to his head and affect his mentality.

"Even though I came in with this high expectation and being a five-star recruit, I

always prided myself on how hard I work and my work ethic," Cooper said. "I was never patient. It was just finding confidence in myself and knowing I am one of the best defensive ends in the nation. I just need to play like it."

Playing the defensive end position at an elite level has become commonplace at Ohio State, with a litany of big-time names excelling under defensive line coach Larry Johnson.

While the Buckeyes will be without a Bosa for the first time since 2012 and the roster might not feature as many well-known defensive linemen, the expectations have not lowered in Columbus.

"The standard is the same as it's always been," Cooper said. "You try to move that yardstick even farther out. Nothing's changed. We're not lowering our standards just because we don't have any Bosas on the team. We're still going to hold ourselves to that level. Me, Chase (Young), Davon (Hamilton), Jashon (Cornell), Haskell (Garrett), all of the young guys – we're still going to be the Rushmen."

A hard worker on the gridiron and in the weight room, Cooper also excels in the classroom. The Columbus native earned Academic All-Big Ten honors in both of the years he was eligible (excludes freshmen).

On the field, Cooper posted 25 tackles (14 solo), 6½ tackles for loss, 2½ sacks, two quarterback hurries, one fumble recovery and one blocked kick, which was a point-after attempt by Tulane, as a junior in 2018.

Cooper showed improvement during his junior season, starting all 13 games for the Scarlet and Gray and earning All-Big

Ten honorable mention, but he still left more to be desired as a pass rusher.

Ohio State brought in co-defensive coordinators Greg Mattison and Jeff Hafley to revamp an Ohio State defense that was statistically one of the worst in program history.

"I feel like it will be fixed this year," Cooper said of the problems on defense. "There was something in the defense that was resisting us from playing the way we were supposed to play. All I know is that it is going to be fixed and we're going to play with that chip on our shoulder."

Mattison and Hafley came in and immediately put an emphasis on playing fast and relying more on football instincts instead of overwhelming the players with strict assignments and complex calls.

Cooper said he loves what he has seen from the new-look defense.

"I feel like that's how football is supposed to be – north and south."

With an emphasis on playing fast and getting after the quarterback, Cooper is poised for a breakout season as a pass rusher opposite Young, who recorded 10½ sacks as a sophomore in 2018.

Beyond football and academics, Cooper took part in the Buckeyes Go International service-learning program this summer, spending a week in Costa Rica. Along with 14 other Ohio State student-athletes, Cooper facilitated sports activities with local youth, worked at a food bank, participated in a beach clean-up and engaged in cultural immersion and educational opportunities.

"That was great. It changed my perspective a lot," Cooper told Buckeye

Sports Bulletin. "It was a seven-day mission trip. We cleaned up beaches. We played with kids. We were teaching kids English. We were just seeing how happy these kids were. You see how much we take for granted here.

"It made me realize you don't need that many things to be happy. It was probably the best trip I've taken in my life. The power went out every night where I was staying. It wasn't like we were staying at a fancy resort with a pool or near the beach.

"There is so little that you need to be happy. I was very happy on that trip. I just loved playing with those little kids. They didn't have shoes on their feet. They were wearing the same clothes they wore yesterday. You saw how genuinely happy they were. It meant the world. I can't wait to do something like that again."

Since his trip, Cooper's perspective has shifted completely, and he feels the better for it.

"A lot of people complain about camp and a lot of people complain about another practice or another day in pads or that it's hot outside," Cooper said. "It's made me appreciate it because kids over there would love to do this. They would do anything just to do what we do every single day. So there's no reason for me to complain or no reason for me not to go out here and not give my all when I know there are kids in Costa Rica who don't have the resources, don't have anything going for them.

"It makes me grateful that I'm here, that I have this opportunity to do everything that I do every single day – makes me not take anything for granted."

FOOTBALL PREVIEW: JONATHON COOPER



COURTESY OF JONATHON COOPER

PAY IT FORWARD – Cooper (front right above, right below) was a part of a Buckeyes Go International service program this summer and spent a week in Costa Rica. He and 14 other Ohio State student-athletes facilitated sports activities with the local youth, worked at a food bank, participated in a beach clean-up and engaged in various cultural immersion and educational opportunities.



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Linebackers Search For Redemption In 2019

By WYATT CROSER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Last season will likely be a season the linebacker group will want to forget.

The positives: A 13-1 record, Rose Bowl win and Big Ten title. Those are some pretty great feats, but when it comes to the group itself, there were many moments of concern. The linebacker group was often the scapegoat for problems surrounding an Ohio State defense that had the No. 86 pass defense and the No. 72 total defense in the country, allowing 39 plays of 30 yards or more on its way to the worst statistical defensive season in program history.

Greg Mattison knew about all those statistics before taking over as co-defensive coordinator for the Buckeyes in the offseason. He just doesn't find them as important as others do. He looks at the positives of Ohio State's previous season much more than the potential negatives.

"Stats are stats," Mattison said. "The only stat that I ever look really, really close at are points, you know, giving up points. That's the bottom line. I didn't even look at what it was last year. It doesn't matter to me."

"Somebody said something to me one time, and I said, 'Guys, they are 13-1.' 13-1. There's a lot of places in the country that would like to raise their hand and say, 'We are 13-1.'"

The linebacking unit returns all of the major contributors from a season ago, including the three main starters from 2018.

On the weak side, senior Malik Harrison should remain the starter coming into 2019, as he represented a strong spot for this linebacking corps. Harrison, who finished with 10 or more tackles in three of the final seven games, and at least seven in five of them, only got better as the year progressed and ended the year tied for the team lead in tackles with 81.

The then-junior linebacker had 10 tackles in the Big Ten Championship Game against Northwestern and had seven tackles, all of which were solos, to help the Buckeyes secure a 28-23 victory in the Rose Bowl against Washington.

Sophomore Dallas Gant seems to be set in the second-string position behind Harrison and has been talked about by Mattison as someone who has impressed during the fall. When asked about Gant, Mattison said he has seen the linebacker grow more comfortable in his second

Projected Starters

| Weakside | Middle | Strongside |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 39 • Malik Harrison | 32 • Tuf Borland | 20 • Pete Werner |
| 6-3 • 240 • Sr. | 6-1 • 232 • Jr. | 6-3 • 239 • Jr. |
| Columbus Walnut Ridge | Bolingbrook, Ill. | Indianapolis Cathedral |
| Finished with 81 tackles, which tied a team high, in 13 games last season. | Tallied 67 tackles, nine tackles for loss and three sacks while playing in all 14 games in 2018. | Finished the 2018 season with 58 tackles, three sacks and seven pass breakups in 14 games. |

season with Ohio State, and that he is "really, really, really stepping forward."

"I've seen him maybe making the most improvement of any of that group from the spring, and I knew Dallas as a high school senior and I tell you, he's a very talented young man," Mattison said. "He's very, very strong. He's got great length. He can run. He's doing a lot of things we need at that position."

The strong side also seems wrapped up, as junior Pete Werner is expected to retain a position at which he started 13 games a season ago. Werner's production was not as consistent as that of the other two primary starters for the linebackers and drew some criticism throughout the season. But Mattison is extremely confident in what Werner brings to the table and expects to see that talent more on display heading into this season.

"I really believe he is a top guy at his position," the coach said. "I've had the opportunity to see a lot of pretty good football players, and I am really impressed with him. He plays extremely hard. He's very physical. He's got great size and strength, he can run, and he's got unbelievable character. There's not many other things that you need to be a good football player, and that's what he's showing."

Behind Werner is likely to be sophomore K'Vaughan Pope, with freshmen Cade Stover and Craig Young also in the mix.

Mattison had positives to take from both Stover's and Young's games, calling Young a "very, very, very good athlete," and Stover a "very talented young man, a big, strong young man that can run."

But when talking about Stover, he mentioned that his greatest benefit is being able to watch how Werner plays the position.

"You're the guy behind him, and you see the way Pete plays and the dedication he has to

doing things correctly. It's been really good for (Stover), and he's very talented," Mattison said.

When Werner, or whoever is on the weak side, is replaced is when Mattison and linebackers coach Al Washington bring out the "Bullet" position, a safety-linebacker hybrid position similar to the "Viper" used by Michigan, where Washington and Mattison previously coached. A pair of safeties – junior Brendon White and junior Jahsen Wint – are the two front-runners to man that spot.

While the outside linebackers seem pretty solidified in the pecking order, the middle linebacker position does not.

The likely front-runner is junior Tuf Borland, who was a team captain in 2018 and started in 11 of the team's 14 games. Borland has managed to play in every game the past two seasons despite constant injury trouble, including an Achilles issue in the spring of 2018.

"I like everything about Tuf Borland's game," Mattison said. "Borland is another one that comes out to practice every day and is extremely intelligent. He takes great pride in getting the front lined up."

But Borland has plenty of competition and likely will not dominate the snap count over either of the two right behind him – junior Baron Browning and sophomore Teradja Mitchell. Both highly touted prospects, Browning was a consensus five-star and Mitchell the No. 2 inside linebacker of his class. It is safe to say there will be rotation in the middle, especially if Borland's injury is nagging or there is any lack of consistency from whoever lands the starting spot.

Regardless, head coach Ryan Day likes what he sees from the unit this year as a whole.

"There's good depth there," Day said. "Guys are practicing hard at linebacker. I'm proud of the way those guys are running around and they are trying to really practice tough," Day said. "That's been a huge emphasis pulling on defenses to be the toughest defense in the country and toughest defense in the Big Ten."

Stats may not matter to Mattison, but in order to keep down the points and stay consistent on the wins, the only stats he does care about, the linebackers must continue to be a point of emphasis and a place for improvement heading into 2019.



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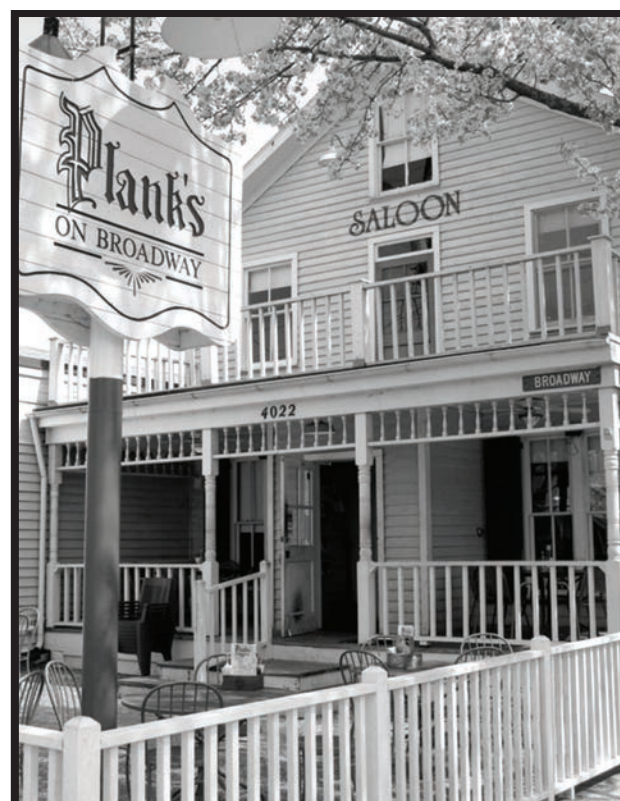
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Secondary Eager To Prove The Bullets Are Back

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ohio State secondary was one of the most heavily criticized units on the team last season in a year that was not reminiscent of the typical image of the Silver Bullets.

Even though they struggled at times in 2018, Ohio State returns many talented defensive backs who have valuable game experience. The only major loss to the Ohio State secondary was cornerback Kendall Sheffield, who chose to forgo his senior season to go to the NFL and was selected in the fourth round by the Atlanta Falcons.

Returning at cornerback are fifth-year senior Damon Arnette (6-0, 195), junior Jeff Okudah (6-1, 200) and sophomore Shaun Wade (6-1, 194). The Buckeye cornerback trio will likely rotate with Arnette and Okudah primarily on the outside and Wade, assuming the role of Swiss Army knife, rotating from nickel to outside corner as well as safety.

Ohio State's defensive backfield will be put together by co-defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff Hafley, who joined Ryan Day's staff in January following a seven-year stint in the NFL.

Hafley enjoys how hard his defensive backs practice and their eagerness to learn. He spoke highly of the talented and perhaps underachieving secondary he inherited, including Wade.

"Shaun's a really smart football player and he's really instinctive, so when he plays inside, he sees things well," Hafley said. "He's good against the run. He's good against the pass. Things move faster in there. He can react quickly mentally and physically, which is awesome. From that aspect, he's a good player inside. He also has the size, length and speed to play the outside. He's a good combination, and he's good at both."

Arnette will also line up in the nickel if he matches up better with the slot receiver and Wade is better suited for the "X" or "Z" receiver. A two-time All-Big Ten honorable mention, Arnette garnered rave reviews from his teammates for his physical and mental improvements. For more on Arnette, see page 42.

Okudah, the No. 1 corner in the 2017 class, enters his junior season with high expectations after leading Ohio State with eight passes defended as a sophomore. Hafley was asked what makes the five-star recruit from Grand Prairie, Texas, so special.

"His work ethic," Hafley said. "He's an exceptional athlete. He's got size, length, speed. He's got great feet. He loves football and he practices hard every single day. What separates him from other people is his mind-set, and that's what the great ones have. That's what he does - he works."

Okudah is projected to be another Ohio State corner selected in the first round of the NFL draft, ranking as high as No. 4 on ESPN's Todd McShay's board. Confident in his improvements, Okudah strives to become an elite corner, like his former teammate Denzel Ward, who was selected No. 4 by the Cleveland Browns and made the Pro Bowl as a rookie.

"The other day someone sent me and



ANDREW LIND

LEADER OF THE DEFENSE – After posting a team-high 81 tackles last season, senior Jordan Fuller comes into the 2019 season as a two-time team captain and leader in the Ohio State secondary.

Denzel's careers up to date," Okudah said. "It's comparable as far as freshman year - did special teams stuff. Sophomore year, stats were kind of identical. Now it's taking that last step, and that's being consistent every single time you step on the field and just becoming a lockdown cornerback."

At safety, Jordan Fuller (6-2, 205) will once again start. Fuller is an intelligent captain of the defense who possesses athleticism and sure tackling ability. The Academic All-American from Old Tappan, New Jersey, recorded 151 tackles (118 solo), 5½ tackles for loss, two fumble recoveries, six passes defended and three interceptions during the past two seasons.

The most curious position in the Ohio State secondary is the new "Bullet" position, which will replace the "Sam" linebacker at times to help defend better against the pass, particularly against shifty slot receivers and talented tight ends.

Junior Brendon White (6-2, 215) took some time to find his position at Ohio State, even sitting behind juniors Isaiah Pryor (6-2, 200) and junior Jahsen Wint (5-10, 200) until he got his shot during the 2018 campaign. From the time he stepped on the field with the No. 1 defense, White made it obvious he belonged.

After spending time at wide receiver, linebacker and safety during his first years at Ohio state, White found a position that is perfect for him in the "Bullet" in co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison's defense. White has the speed, athleticism and coverage ability to defend the pass, and he also possesses the size, strength and hard-hitting ability to play outside linebacker and fill against

| Projected Starters | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Cornerback 1 • Jeff Okudah 6-1 • 200 • Jr. South Grand Prairie, Texas Posted 34 tackles (26 solo) and led the team with eight passes defended in 2018.</p> | <p>Cornerback 3 • Damon Arnette 6-0 • 195 • 5th Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas Recorded 40 tackles (31 solo) with six passes defended and one interception last year.</p> |
| <p>Safety 4 • Jordan Fuller 6-2 • 205 • Sr. Old Tappan, N.J. Led the team in solo tackles as a sophomore (57) and as a junior (61).</p> | <p>Nickel/Safety 24 • Shaun Wade 6-1 • 194 • So. Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Notched 31 tackles, seven passes defended and a team-high three interceptions last season.</p> |
| <p>Bullet 25 • Brendon White 6-2 • 215 • Jr. Powell (Ohio) Olentangy Liberty Made 46 tackles with four tackles for loss, two passes defended and one interception in 2018.</p> | |

the run. Looking bigger and stronger than ever, White is poised for a big-time junior season in Columbus.

The other safety position has not yet been decided, with a variety of different defensive backs auditioning at the role. While Wade, who had a team-high three interceptions in 2018, is still listed as a corner, he will most likely start at this spot. Hafley and Mattison plan to change personnel based on the opposition, however.

Sophomore safety Josh Proctor (6-2, 205) has turned heads in camp, displaying the ball-hawking abilities that made him such a highly touted recruit. The Owasso, Okla., native flashed on certain

plays but needs to string together steadier production to carve out a bigger role.

"He's starting to be consistent," Hafley said of Proctor. "Josh came out and it was like, interception, interception, and then he started to press a little bit and was trying to make plays. You've just got to let plays come to you in this scheme. And he's getting back to that. If he's consistent, we'll find a role for him and get him in."

Pryor, who opened the 2018 campaign as the starter at safety next to Fuller, has made improvements to his game and will push for playing time. Wint, who took Pryor's spot at safety last season before relinquishing it to White, is push-

FOOTBALL PREVIEW: DEFENSIVE BACKS

ing White at "Bullet" and will serve as his backup. Wint fits better at "Bullet" because of his ability to take on blocks and hit hard.

Beyond the returning contributors, junior Amir Riep (6-0, 195), who has spent time at corner and safety, will continue to excel on special teams and serve as a primary backup.

Sophomore corner Sevyn Banks (6-1, 200) drew praise for an interception during a scrimmage, showing his knack for big plays like the touchdown he scored against Michigan on a blocked punt. The four-star from Orlando, Fla., will be one of the first corners to fill in for the starters.

Ohio State's depth at corner does not end there, with a litany of young DBs eager for playing time, including juniors Marcus Williamson (5-10, 180) and Darryl Sinclair (5-9, 185), sophomores Cameron Brown (6-0, 188) and Lloyd McFarquhar (5-9, 170), and redshirt freshman Tyreke Johnson (6-1, 195).

While Fuller, White, Wade, Proctor, Pryor and Wint give the back end of the defense experienced depth, there are other talented safeties vying for time.

Redshirt freshman Marcus Hooker (5-11, 200) and true freshmen Ronnie Hickman (6-1, 200) and Bryson Shaw (6-2, 185) have bright futures and can make an impact on special teams. Junior Owen Fankhauser (5-11, 195), sophomore Kevin Dever (6-0, 195) and redshirt freshman Ryan Batsch (6-2, 205) represent the walk-on safeties.

In addition to hiring Hafley, Day brought in Matt Barnes from Maryland as assistant secondary coach and special teams coordinator. Working closely with the defensive backs, Barnes will likely feature some of the backups on special teams.

Schematically, Hafley and Mattison will vary from exclusively playing press-man coverage. Hafley said he loves press



ANDREW LIND

ALL OVER THE FIELD – Having already played cornerback, safety and nickel, sophomore defensive back Shaun Wade's versatility will allow him to play multiple positions in new co-defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley's scheme during the upcoming season.

man and finds it necessary but believes switching it up will keep the opposition on its toes. Despite being recruited to play man coverage, the Buckeyes have welcomed the scheme shift with open arms after seeing its benefits.

"When you play so much press man, you don't realize the toll it puts on your body over the course of a 14-game sea-

son, running back and forth and always being fatigued," Okudah said. "When you're able to mix up some coverages, play some zone, it's a relief on your legs. And we're able to analyze the game more and sit back, look at the quarterback, read what he wants to do. Implementing more zone into our defense has helped us generate more turnovers."

After receiving so much criticism for their performance last season, the Ohio State secondary is ready to put it in the past and get back to the Buckeye football of the past.

"Reset. Click a reset button," Arnette said. "Forget it. Don't even think about last year. Don't even think about that because the Bullets are back, for real."

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FRIDAY — 7:10

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- Grateful Dead® Ticket Package, presented by Cincinnati Bell: Available at Reds.com/Themes (item only available with purchase of ticket package)



SATURDAY — 6:40

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AUGUST 19-21



MONDAY — 7:10

TUESDAY — 7:10

WEDNESDAY — 12:35

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New Coach, Same Emphasis For Special Teams

By CRAIG MERZ
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Everybody knows Ryan Day has the unenviable task of replacing Urban Meyer as head coach of the Ohio State Buckeyes. But new assistant coach Matt Barnes has also drawn the tough task of taking over one of Meyer's duties, that of overseeing the special teams.

Ohio State last season had the second-best kickoff defense, allowing 14.91 yards per return to New Mexico's 14.89, and the punt defense yielded 3.3 yards a return to rank eighth.

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it," Barnes said. "Things have been done really, really well here. I would say at an elite level.

"We've been excellent here, but we want to reach a new level. Obviously, the bar's been set very high and we want to continue to push forward."

Barnes, who was named special teams coordinator and assistant secondary coach in January, also knows there's room for improvement in other areas. Despite an abundance of talented athletes, the Buckeyes have not returned a non-blocked punt for a touchdown since 2014 and a kickoff for a score since 2010. Ohio State last season was 112th of 129 teams on kickoff returns with an average of 17.8 yards. OSU was tied for 73rd in punt returns at 8.0 yards.

Barnes expressed some concern about those numbers but also noted that the Buckeyes have often in the past not had to rely on the return units to be game changers.

"We want to be explosive on return teams for sure," he said. "I know this. There hasn't been a lack of points scored around here."

With Barnes as Maryland's special teams coordinator last season, the Terrapins ranked 18th nationally with a 24.0-yard average on kickoff returns. Ty Johnson (98 yards) and Javon Leake (97) each had kickoff returns for TDs.

Barnes is fortunate that the Buckeyes have experience at the critical spots.

Junior kicker Blake Haubeil (6-4, 225) took over for injured senior Sean Nuernberger early last season and made 10 of 13 field goals and all 37 extra points.

His long snapper is graduate Liam McCullough (6-2, 237) from nearby Worthington Kilbourne, and junior Drue Chrisman (6-3, 220) is the punter as well as the holder for place kicks.

Ohio State also has veterans on the return units such as fifth-year senior K.J. Hill, graduate receiver C.J. Saunders and junior running back Demario McCall. Redshirt freshman receiver Jaelen Gill and true freshman receiver Garrett Wilson are also in the mix.

Barnes said having an offense as good as Ohio State's will influence whether he will be bold or conservative with the special teams.

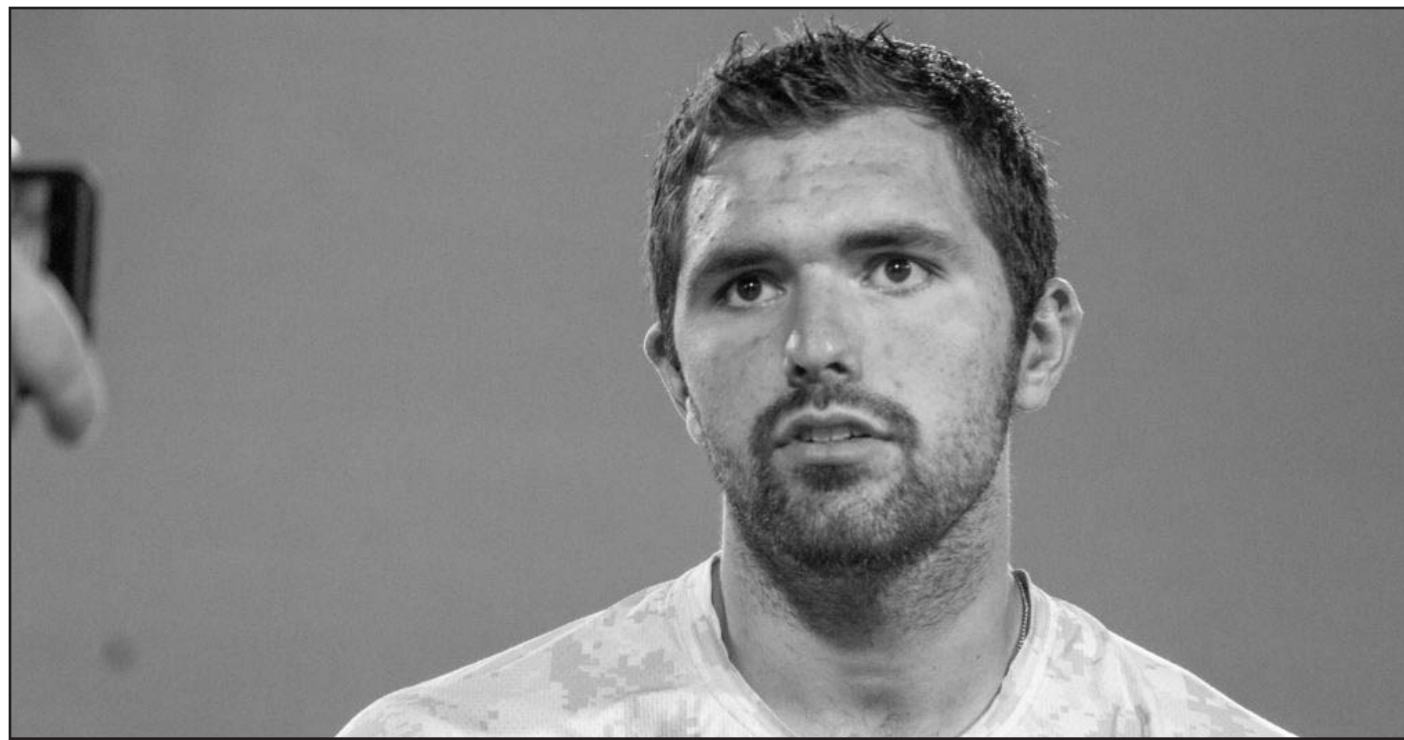
"It's game by game and situational within the game," he said. "You've got to see how the flow of the game is going, and maybe you call for a block and you'll get one. Maybe you'll want to set a return and make sure we get possession here. Maybe you've got a team that's backed up. If you can just field the ball, you get the ball on the plus-40 and maybe you've got a chance to go down and score."

A Foot Up On Kicking Game

Haubeil – a Canisius, N.Y., product – made an OSU career-long 47-yard field against Minnesota last season and made a pair of 19-yarders vs. Michigan to extend the lead to 27-19 in the 62-39 win.

His success after Nuernberger was injured gives him a boost for this season.

"Having a guy like Sean Nuernberger there to help me physically and mentally and being my



ANDREW LIND

RELIABLE LEG – Junior Blake Haubeil converted 10 of 13 field goals and all 37 extra-point attempts last season after taking over for the injured Sean Nuernberger.

Projected Starters

| Kicker | Punter | Long Snapper |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 95 • Blake Haubeil | 91 • Drue Chrisman | 49 • Liam McCullough |
| 6-3 • 220 • Jr. | 6-3 • 220 • Jr. | 6-2 • 237 • 5th |
| Buffalo (N.Y.) Canisius | Cincinnati LaSalle | Columbus Worthington Kilbourne |
| In addition to splitting time with Sean Nuernberger, Haubeil also handled kickoff duties. | His net punting average of 41.76 yards was sixth nationally in 2018. | Entering his fourth season as the Buckeyes' long snapper. |

big brother, that was huge," Haubeil said. "To be able to go into a game and execute at a high level, it definitely gave me confidence and experience.

"I want to be that guy they have confidence in out there for a game-winning kick, or a kick before the half, long kick, short, whatever."

As steady as Haubeil was last year, he had to adapt to the new kickoff rule that allowed for a fair catch inside the 25-yard line to be considered a touchback and placed on the 25.

Prior to the change, Meyer loved to try to pin the kick into a corner and send his troops to swarm the returner. The downside was Haubeil was kicking the ball out of bounds too much for the coach's liking.

That strategy changed somewhat last season, and only two of Haubeil's 103 kickoffs went out of play.

"We want to add some wrinkles if we can," Barnes said. "We have some outstanding players. We've got a really good kicker coming back. We're not trying to reinvent the wheel there. We just want them to play fast."

He outlined his philosophy for kicking and receiving kickoffs.

"From a kickoff standpoint we're going to kick them and we're just going to cover them and if they choose to fair catch it, so be it," he said. "From a kickoff return standpoint, we'll be smart about what we do but we're going to be explosive. We're going to strive to be, anyway. We have the returners to do that."

McCall (5-9, 195) last season averaged a team-best 19.5 yards on 10 kickoff returns with a long of 42 yards

"He may get first crack," at kick returns, Barnes said of the former North Ridgeville, Ohio, standout.

Saunders (5-10, 190) from Dublin Coffman High School outside Columbus, had two returns

for 24 yards, and Hill, the 6-0, 195-pounder from North Little Rock, Arkansas, gained 4 yards on his lone runback.

Other long snappers include McCullough's brother Roen McCullough (6-1, 230), a red-shirt freshman from Worthington Kilbourne; Bradley Robinson (6-1, 230), a junior from Troy (Mich.) Athens; and Louisville, Ohio, junior Phillip Thomas (6-0, 230).

There are two other kickers on the roster: Jack Deneher (6-4, 200), a freshman from Dover, Ohio, and Dominic DiMaccio (5-8, 190), a sophomore from Columbus St. Francis DeSales.

If Haubeil gets injured, Chrisman would handle the kicking duties. He was 38 of 40 on extra points as a senior at Cincinnati LaSalle and had a game-winning 41-yard field goal.

Too Good To Be Drue

Chrisman was a semifinalist his first two seasons for the Ray Guy Award as the best collegiate punter, and he's on the preseason watch list again.

He was third-team all-Big Ten last year when the Buckeyes were sixth nationally in net punting average at 41.8 yards. He averaged 43.2 yards per punt with a long of 65. He dropped 29 punts inside the 20, the second most in school history, and he ranks sixth all-time at OSU with 54 in his career.

He famously put five punts in the second half inside the 6-yard line at Michigan State last season, which led to nine points in the 26-6 victory. That performance offset his first punt of the game that went 4 yards.

"It was a fun game," he said. "It started off shaky, broke the Ohio State record for shortest punt. Next punt, that's all I was thinking, make up for the first one."

Of course, in order to down the ball deep

in enemy territory, it takes players at the skill positions to race downfield then quickly react to a bouncing oblong ball. No one in the country was likely better at it last season than Terry McLaurin, now of the Washington Redskins.

"I am going to miss Terry," Chrisman said. "He was the best of the best. You see some video of him now with the Redskins every now and then covering a punt. He's surely going to be missed, but every year we have the best gunners in America, no doubt."

Junior cornerback Jeff Okudah (6-1, 200) of South Grand Prairie, Texas, is one of those vying to replace McLaurin.

Another possible top gunner is San Marcos (Calif.) Mission Hills sophomore receiver Chris Olave (6-1, 185). Olave was in a different role last year when he broke through the line and blocked a Michigan punt in the third quarter that was returned by Sezyn Banks for a 33-yard touchdown to make it 41-19 in the third quarter.

As for punt returns, the staff wants game-breakers with the caveat that keeping the ball is the priority.

"I think you try to find your most dynamic guy, but at the end of the day, ball security is critical," Day said.

Hill (6-0, 195) led the Buckeyes with 14 punt returns, six more than Saunders. Hill averaged 5.4 yards a return, Saunders 6.2.

Gill (6-0, 195) from suburban Columbus' Westerville South, and Wilson (6-0, 188), a 247. com five-star recruit from Austin (Texas) Lake Travis, have the speed and moves to provide OSU with that elusive punt return TD.

The other punters are junior Jake Metzger (6-2, 225) from Doylestown (Pa.) Central Bucks West and Michael O'Shaughnessy (6-4, 200), a freshman from just outside Columbus in New Albany.

Arnette Returns To OSU Highly Motivated

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State produced five cornerbacks who were taken in the first round of the NFL draft from 2014-18: Bradley Roby, Eli Apple, Marshon Lattimore, Gareon Conley and Denzel Ward.

The list may be daunting to a current Buckeye corner, who feels like he must live up to these immense expectations. However, fifth-year Ohio State cornerback Damon Arnette is up to the task, according to fifth-year wideout and team captain K.J. Hill.

"I feel like he has that edge like they had," Hill said. "Every single one of them had something to prove because they had to fill shoes. It's a process each year and basically, he's the leader of that room. I know in the back of his head he doesn't want to let

them down because if he lets them down then he's letting them down in the NFL, too. They're the ones that taught him."

Arnette started at corner during the past two seasons at Ohio State, but his performance has been met with mixed reviews.

Following his redshirt sophomore season, when he recorded 44 tackles (35 solo), three tackles for loss, one forced fumble, one fumble recovery, eight passes defended and two interceptions, Arnette entered the 2018 season as a preseason All-America selection by Sports Illustrated.

His redshirt junior season did not go as expected. Ohio State had statistically one of the worst defenses in program history, with Arnette and the Buckeye defensive backs receiving a lot

of the criticism. Fellow cornerback Jeff Okudah noticed a difference in Arnette following the disappointment of last season and expressed confidence in his teammate.

"I see someone that's just fired up," Okudah said. "He's ready to go. He hears everything that people say about him. And when people just poke at you, poke at you, poke at you - I told him that he has a chance to look at all his critics in the eyes and tell everyone, put some respect on his name. I think that's what he's set out to do, and I have the most faith that he can accomplish that."



Damon Arnette

Although Arnette's season did not reach his expectations, the Fort Lauderdale, Fla., native notched 40 tackles (31 solo), six passes defended and one interception, earning his second honor-

able-mention All-Big Ten honor in 2018.

Arnette garnered much criticism for his play during Ohio State's 13-1 Big Ten title season that concluded in a Rose Bowl win. He told the media he was well-aware of the numerous naysayers who would constantly criticize him as a young corner. The St. Thomas Aquinas (Fla.) alum received a message from someone online who told him he needed to go back to high school and pick another sport.

First-year secondary coach and co-defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley began working with Arnette after being hired in January, and the seven-year NFL secondary coach could not imagine the fifth-year corner being deficient at all.

"If I woke up today and just met him and no one ever told me anything about him, I would think you were crazy if you told me there were issues with him," Hafley said. "He has done everything that we have asked him to do.

"I think he has a chance to have a really good year. He's made of the right stuff. He's tough. He loves football. He might like football more than most people I have ever been around."

Hafley's optimism is mirrored by Arnette, who feels like he took a big step forward this offseason and his play began to shine more once he held himself accountable off the field.

"I feel like a lot of dudes, they just mature faster than others, and I feel like with me, I've always just been an on-edge type of person," Arnette said. "I just realized that playing with fire, you will get burnt a lot of different ways - it just isn't worth it. And a part of learning from that stuff is going through certain things and just learning from those mistakes."

It is clear Arnette feels as though his experiences, both good and bad, have influenced the man he is becoming. Hafley joined the staff with a fresh perspective and was asked how Arnette was coming along after an "up-and-down career."

"I haven't seen any down yet," Hafley said. "Whatever happens right now is all I see because I'm here now. I haven't seen any down from him. I see a guy who's doing everything right on and off the field. I see a guy who's giving it all he has, a guy in the meeting room who's awesome. I'm so very pleased with Damon."

Hafley is not the only Buckeye to be impressed by Arnette. Hill was asked which defensive back presented the toughest matchup for him in practice among the talented Buckeye secondary, featuring Jordan Fuller, Brendon White, Okudah and Arnette.

"The toughest player from my position is Damon Arnette," Hill said. "Me and him came in together. We've always been going against each other since we came in. That's in the circle drill, one-on-ones, tackle drill, anything. Because I'm a receiver, he's a cornerback, we know each other's games.

"He's aggressive, I'm aggressive. He's a strong guy, I'm a strong guy. I feel like iron sharpens iron and we get better by going against each other."

Not only does Arnette impress Hill as a competitor and talented cornerback, but the wideout said he's noticed Arnette's commitment to becoming the best he can be.

"I feel like he knows this is his last year and then he doesn't want to waste a day like I'm the same way," Hill said. "We came back, why waste a day? We all stay after, we do releases, we talk football, we do everything football, we hang out together every day.

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FOOTBALL PREVIEW: DAMON ARNETTE

"I feel like he's going to have an awesome year, just how hard his work ethic and how determined he is. He definitely has a chip on his shoulder from people talking about him. He just wants to prove everybody wrong, and he has big shoes to fill in the cornerback role from all the people who just came out of there. He wants to be one of those guys, and I feel like he can be."

Fuller, who will also be a third-year starter, expressed confidence in Arnette as well. Sidelined by injury during the spring, Fuller – a team captain – had a lot of time to observe his teammate, and what he saw prompted him to have high expectations.

"What I've seen is the Damon Arnette that I always knew was there," Fuller told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "I'm not surprised at all about how he played in the spring because he played great. I'm not surprised at all that he's working harder than ever because it's his last year – it's both of our last years – and we know we only want it to go one way. I'm just really excited for Damon. It's going to be a big year, and you guys are going to see."

With fellow returning starters Hill, Fuller and Okudah praising Arnette and his enhanced drive to be great, it was natural to ask him what was different.

"Truly I feel like a lot of it with me has been off-field things that reflect on the field," Arnette said. "So once I cleaned up everything, everything else started to shine a little bit more. And other things are being noticed once I got certain things right in my life."

Arnette's teammates and coaches are excited about his improved play and focus, but they almost did not have the veteran corner, who returned to Ohio for his dog, Legend, and some clothes – dead set on entering the 2019 NFL draft.

"I came back to Columbus just really to get my stuff and my dog, but after talking with Coach Hafley – just really after one conversation with him, I told him mid-conversation I would stay," Arnette said.

Arnette wanted the opportunity to learn under Hafley's tutelage, confident that his coaching better aligned with his play style.

"Seeing the technique he teaches is what a lot of us do naturally, I would have hated myself if I would have left and saw everybody else doing what we're doing now and I was somewhere else," Arnette said. "I wanted to be a part of that."

Beyond Hafley's coaching ideology and techniques, Arnette felt like he would be selling himself short if he didn't return.

"Having the thoughts of leaving, the question was, was I the best player I know I can be? Did I leave everything out there? Do I regret anything? And I couldn't check all of those boxes," Arnette said. "Then I was like, 'All right, can you live with that?' And then I realized, 'Nah, I can't.' I felt like I'm not doing Buckeye Nation and my teammates a service if I had left on the note I would have left last year."

In addition to Hafley, another man who is familiar with the NFL helped Arnette reconsider a departure from Ohio State and play another season. That influence was former Ohio State standout and NFL Hall of Fame wide receiver Cris Carter.

Carter has known Arnette his whole life and found out the Scarlet and Gray cornerback had decided to pursue the NFL from his father at the Rose Bowl. Carter approached Arnette about it in Pasadena, but he shrugged him off. Then, when Arnette was getting ready to head back to Columbus to finish moving out, the Hall of Famer called him and "went off."

"He was like, 'Man, you're not All-American, you're not this, that and the

third,'" Arnette said of Carter. "Everything he was saying cut deep, but it was true. When something cuts deep but it's true, you've got to evaluate what they're saying. He wasn't the only person to say something, and when somebody isn't the only person saying something, there has got to be some truth."

"It definitely hit my pride a little bit, because me knowing what I can do, me knowing what I've shown and then them just spitting facts back into my face, it was really just a reality check. That's why I'm using this whole year to just get everything I left out there."

Returning to Ohio State meant more classes for Arnette, and while he has impressed football coaches with his tenacity and ability most of his life, success in the classroom has not come as easily. At times struggling to keep his grades afloat,

it was possible he could have been a student-athlete who never graduated.

Now an Ohio State graduate with his focus locked on football, Arnette will likely be one of the Buckeyes' only third-year starters on defense, along with Fuller and junior linebacker Tuf Borland.

Another team captain, senior defensive end Jonathon Cooper, told BSB he has seen a shift in Arnette. Although he wasn't voted a team captain himself, Arnette acts like one.

"He is taking that step in being a good player and holding himself accountable but also holding his whole entire unit accountable," Cooper said. "He has grown into a great leader and a great captain where we can rely on him to talk to the young guys."

Arnette takes pride in a bigger leadership role, using his own growing pains and mistakes to help his teammates.

"I try to use my experiences to help a

lot of young guys now that I'm a senior," Arnette said. "Just going through some of the certain things that I went through – and just maybe the message should come off a little bit differently than maybe I received it. I try to just use what I know I rejected and what I accepted to help others."

Beyond the gridiron and the locker room, Arnette has made a concerted effort to give back and have a positive influence on the community. He visited various elementary schools to speak to the kids during an offseason full of workouts and classes, while in pursuit of his degree.

"Just seeing how I can use my platform to really help somebody younger than me, in ages of my life when I knew I was getting in the most trouble," Arnette said of his community outreach. "It really felt good to just try to help somebody else."



ANDREW LIND

ROOM TO IMPROVE – Though he considered entering his name into the 2019 NFL draft, Ohio State cornerback Damon Arnette heeded the advice of former Buckeyes wide receiver Cris Carter and opted to instead return to Columbus for one final season.

Buckeye Sports BulletinBoard

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Ohio State Football Scholarship Chart

| POSITION | SENIORS | JUNIORS | SOPHOMORES | REDSHIRT FRESHMEN | FRESHMEN |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| QUARTERBACK | 4 Chris Chugunov# | 12 Gunnar Hoak | 1 Justin Fields | | |
| RUNNING BACK | | 2 J.K. Dobbins 30 Demario McCall | | 33 Master Teague | 22 Steele Chambers 23 Marcus Crowley |
| H-BACK | 80 C.J. Saunders# 14 K.J. Hill# | | | 21 Jaelen Gill | |
| WIDE RECEIVER | 9 Binjimen Victor 11 Austin Mack | 15 Jaylen Harris | 17 Chris Olave 87 Elijah Gardiner | 7 Kamryn Babb | 5 Garrett Wilson 6 Jameson Williams |
| TIGHT END | 13 Rashod Berry# | 81 Jake Hausmann 89 Luke Farrell | 88 Jeremy Ruckert | | 83 Cormontae Hamilton |
| OFFENSIVE TACKLE | 58 Joshua Alabi# 76 Branden Bowen# | 75 Thayer Munford | | 74 Max Wray 78 Nicholas Petit-Frere | 66 Enokk Vimahi 79 Dawand Jones |
| OFFENSIVE GUARD | 63 Kevin Woidke# 73 Jonah Jackson# | 61 Gavin Cupp | 52 Wyatt Davis | 55 Matthew Jones | 68 Ryan Jacoby |
| CENTER | | | 71 Josh Myers | | 77 Harry Miller |
| LONG SNAPPER | 49 Liam McCullough# | | | | |
| KICKER | | 95 Blake Haubeil | | | |
| PUNTER | | 91 Drue Chrisman | | | |
| DEFENSIVE TACKLE | 9 Jashon Cornell# 53 Davon Hamilton# 67 Robert Landers# | 52 Antwuan Jackson 92 Haskell Garrett | 6 Taron Vincent 72 Tommy Togiai 98 Jerron Cage | | 90 Jaden McKenzie |
| DEFENSIVE END | 18 Jonathon Cooper | 2 Chase Young | 11 Tyreke Smith 54 Tyler Friday | 17 Alex Williams 8 Javontae Jean-Baptiste | 33 Zach Harrison 97 Noah Potter |
| LINEBACKER | 39 Malik Harrison 47 Justin Hilliard# | 5 Baron Browning 20 Pete Werner 32 Tuf Borland | 7 Terajda Mitchell 19 Dallas Gant 36 K'Vaughan Pope | | 16 Cade Stover 37 Craig Young 41 Tommy Eichenberg |
| CORNERBACK | 3 Damon Arnette# | 1 Jeff Okudah 10 Amir Riep 21 Marcus Williamson | 12 Sevyn Banks 24 Shaun Wade 26 Cameron Brown | 13 Tyreke Johnson | |
| SAFETY | 4 Jordan Fuller | 14 Isaiah Pryor 23 Jahsen Wint 25 Brendon White | 15 Josh Proctor | 29 Marcus Hooker | 28 Ronnie Hickman 38 Bryson Shaw |
| TOTALS | 19 | 22 | 18 | 9 | 18 |

– 5th-Year Senior • Returning Starters In **BOLD**

Ohio State Future Schedules

| 2020 | | 2021 | | 2022 | | 2023 | |
|----------|------------------------------|----------|------------------------------|----------|------------------------------|----------|------------------------------|
| Date | Opponent | Date | Opponent | Date | Opponent | Date | Opponent |
| Sept. 5 | BOWLING GREEN | Sept. 4 | at Minnesota | Sept. 3 | NOTRE DAME | Sept. 2 | at Indiana |
| Sept. 12 | at Oregon | Sept. 11 | OREGON | Sept. 10 | ARKANSAS STATE | Sept. 9 | SAN JOSE STATE |
| Sept. 19 | BUFFALO | Sept. 18 | TULSA | Sept. 17 | TOLEDO | Sept. 17 | WESTERN KENTUCKY |
| Sept. 26 | RUTGERS | Sept. 25 | AKRON | Sept. 24 | at Michigan State | Sept. 23 | at Notre Dame |
| Oct. 10 | IOWA | Oct. 2 | at Nebraska | Oct. 1 | at Penn State | Oct. 7 | MARYLAND |
| Oct. 17 | at Michigan State | Oct. 9 | PURDUE | Oct. 8 | RUTGERS | Oct. 14 | at Purdue |
| Oct. 24 | at Penn State | Oct. 23 | at Rutgers | Oct. 15 | IOWA | Oct. 21 | PENN STATE |
| Oct. 31 | NEBRASKA | Oct. 30 | MICHIGAN STATE | Oct. 29 | INDIANA | Oct. 28 | at Wisconsin |
| Nov. 7 | INDIANA | Nov. 6 | at Indiana | Nov. 5 | at Northwestern | Nov. 4 | at Rutgers |
| Nov. 14 | at Maryland | Nov. 13 | MARYLAND | Nov. 12 | WISCONSIN | Nov. 11 | MICHIGAN STATE |
| Nov. 21 | at Illinois | Nov. 20 | PENN STATE | Nov. 19 | at Maryland | Nov. 18 | MINNESOTA |
| Nov. 28 | MICHIGAN | Nov. 27 | at Michigan | Nov. 27 | MICHIGAN | Nov. 25 | at Michigan |
| Dec. 5 | Big Ten Title (Indianapolis) | Dec. 4 | Big Ten Title (Indianapolis) | Dec. 3 | Big Ten Title (Indianapolis) | Dec. 3 | Big Ten Title (Indianapolis) |

FAU Presents Unique Challenge For Buckeyes

By PATRICK MAYHORN
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

You would be hard-pressed to find a stranger career in coaching than Lane Kiffin's. The 44-year-old son of longtime NFL defensive coordinator Monte Kiffin was once considered a bit of a prodigy, climbing through the ranks of football coaches at an amazing rate, taking his first head coaching job at 32 with the Oakland Raiders. From there, most know the story of Kiffin's almost completely backward career, in which he fell from the NFL to the college ranks at Tennessee, then USC, a coordinator job with Alabama, and now, head coach at Florida Atlantic, where he was hired in 2017.

If you looked at that career in the other direction, it would tell a familiar story: one of a coach starting with a Group of Five job and slowly working his way up to the NFL. In the case of Kiffin, the story is of a coach with all the potential in the world, the flash to match and essentially nothing to show for the hype. Kiffin is 51-31 in his college football coaching career and went just 5-15 in the NFL. Not awful, but nothing significant enough to merit the fanfare that seems to come with his name.

That background on Kiffin is what made it so strange when just two years ago, he once again captured the headlines following the 2017 season and seemed to pop up for just about every job opening. Sure, he led the Owls to an 11-3 campaign, but you would have to think that at some point Kiffin needs to establish himself for more than one season to regain some of the hype he once captured. On the contrary, Kiffin told ESPN last summer that he had "several schools gauging his interest in their job open-

ings" following that first year.

Ultimately, in that same interview, Kiffin explained that he was happy in Boca Raton, Fla., and in a smaller market with less pressure. He turned all suitors away and prepared for his second act at FAU with another transfer-heavy roster filled with a lot of talent and a lot of questions.

His encore was less impressive. The Owls went just 5-7 and faltered late when they had a chance to reach bowl eligibility, dropping close games to a good North Texas team and a bad Charlotte squad. FAU's offense was still solid, though not as good as it had been in 2017, but the defense completely fell apart, leading to the disappointing season and to quite a few close losses.

Despite the step-back season, the hype for Kiffin continued to endure. There's still a shine around his name that doesn't seem to dim, regardless of results on the field. Why is that?

The key lies in Kiffin's offense, both for understanding Kiffin as a coach and for understanding how Ohio State has to handle the Owls to avoid any sort of upset bid in game one under Ryan Day. Say what you will about Kiffin, but he has proved to be a very good offensive mind in his years as a coach. His offenses were decent in a year at Tennessee, were good to very good for three of four years at USC and have ranged from solid to excellent in two years at FAU.

On top of that, Kiffin brought Nick Saban's Alabama offense into the 21st century and led directly to the Crimson Tide's new approach to winning games, relying on scoring and explosive plays rather than just defense. He is not the coaching savior, but he can coach offense, and that is going to be point of interest number one for the Buckeyes.

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Get To Know ... Florida Atlantic

About Florida Atlantic

- **2018 record:** 5-7 (3-5 C-USA).
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Spread; Defensive Formation – Multiple; Starters Returning – Offense 7, Defense 6, Specialists 2.
- **Head Coach:** Lane Kiffin, 3rd year (16-10)
- **Series History:** No previous matchups.
- **School Facts:** Location – Boca Raton, Fla.; Enrollment – 30,808; Nickname – Owls; Colors – Blue & Red; Conference – Conference USA; Stadium – FAU Stadium (Surface, Turf; Capacity, 29,419).

Top Offensive Returners

| Rushing | Att. | Net | Avg. | TD |
|----------------|------|-----|------|----|
| Chris Robison | 64 | 274 | 4.28 | 3 |
| B.J. Emmons | 35 | 173 | 4.94 | 1 |
| Chauncey Mason | 27 | 137 | 5.07 | 1 |

| Passing | Comp.-Att. | Pct. | Yds. | TD-INT |
|---------------|------------|------|-------|--------|
| Chris Robison | 192-304 | 63.2 | 2,540 | 12-12 |

| Receiving | Rec. | Net | Avg. | TD |
|------------------|------|-----|------|----|
| Willie Wright | 46 | 449 | 9.8 | 2 |
| Harrison Bryant | 45 | 662 | 14.7 | 4 |
| Tavaris Harrison | 21 | 368 | 17.5 | 0 |

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game – 31.1
Rushing Yards Per Game – 241.8
Passing Yards Per Game – 237.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 478.8

2019 Schedule

| Date | Opponent | Time/Result (ET) |
|----------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Aug. 31 | at Ohio State | Noon |
| Sept. 7 | UCF | 7 p.m. |
| Sept. 14 | at Ball State | 2 p.m. |
| Sept. 21 | WAGNER | 6 p.m. |
| Sept. 28 | at Charlotte | 3:30 p.m. |
| Oct. 12 | MIDDLE TENNESSE | 4 p.m. |
| Oct. 18 | MARSHALL | 6:30 p.m. |
| Oct. 26 | at Old Dominion | 3:30 p.m. |
| Nov. 2 | at Western Kentucky | 4 p.m. |
| Nov. 9 | FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL | 6 p.m. |
| Nov. 23 | at Texas-San Antonio | 6 p.m. |
| Nov. 30 | SOUTHERN MISS | 3:30 p.m. |
| Dec. 7 | C-USA Championship | TBA |

Top Defensive Returners

| Def. Leaders | Solo-Ast. | Tot. | TFL-Yds. | Sacks |
|--------------|-----------|------|----------|-------|
| Rashad Smith | 36 – 50 | 86 | 5.5 – 16 | 1.0 |
| James Pierre | 36 – 19 | 55 | 2.5 – 11 | 0 |
| Zyon Gilbert | 30 – 21 | 51 | 0.5 – 2 | 0 |

| Interceptions | No. | Yds | Avg | TD | Long |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|----|------|
| Rashad Smith | 4 | 22 | 5.5 | 0 | 16 |
| Chris Tooley | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Korel Smith | 1 | -10 | -10 | 0 | -10 |

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed – 31.8
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 186.1
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 238.4
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 424.5

Luckily for Ohio State, Kiffin is breaking in one of his least experienced offenses ever this season. The Owls have to replace their top two running backs, top receiver and three starters on the line, including first-team All-Conference USA left tackle Reggie Bain.

Now, FAU is not without talent, as Kiffin has recruited very well relative to the other teams in Conference USA, and the Owls do have quarterback Chris Robison back for his sophomore season as well as playmakers at receiver ready to step up, but this will be Kiffin's most taxing job yet. His schemes are good, his plays are good, but he still needs the players, and while he has athletes, he doesn't have proven commodities.

Unlike last season, the defense looks pretty good on paper for the Owls. They return three contributors on the line, three linebackers with experience including Rashad Smith, the best player on the defense in 2018, and their top cornerback, along with two safeties with starting experience. While the offense has unproven talent, the defense has proven contributors, with questions about talent and cohesion.

Players To Watch

Offensively, Robison is going to make or break this season for FAU. He led the Owls for 12 games last season and threw for 2,540 yards along with 12 touchdowns and as many interceptions. If he can improve on that decent freshman season, cut down on interceptions and create a few more explosive plays, he could be very good. He is a former four-star recruit who signed with and promptly left Oklahoma, so he has talent, but he has yet to prove that he has the accuracy and intangibles to lead a team.

He will have some help, in the form of tight end Harrison Bryant, slot receiver Willie Wright and wideout Tavaris Harris, who came on strong last year but faltered late. Bryant could very well lead the Owls in receiving this season, and with last year's top receiver Jovon Durante off to the NFL, it may be up to Bryant to provide a target for Robison. He put up 662 yards on 45 receptions last season and will almost certainly see even more targets in 2019.

Wright should serve as a good test for Ohio State's new defense, because he's exactly the

kind of wideout who would have given the Buckeyes problems in 2018. He was an efficient threat last season, putting up 474 yards on 46 receptions, though he didn't make a ton of big plays. If Ohio State can keep him neutralized and avoid putting safeties in man coverage on him, it will be a very good sign. If Wright has a big game, it still may not be enough to spark the upset, but it would be concerning for the future of the OSU defense.

Running back B.J. Emmons seems to be the guy set to replace Devin Singletary, and while he has very little experience, he's a former Alabama player and blue-chip recruit, with just 35 attempts for 173 yards in his career, all of which came back at Alabama in 2016, when he was a freshman. Kiffin said that Emmons was maturing in the spring and he seems ready to trust him with the bulk of the carries, though Arkansas State transfer Chauncey Mason will also play as a change-of-pace back.

There is a bit of a wild card at halfback in James Charles, who has struggled with injuries for much of his career but seemed to finally break through this spring. He serves as a bit of a balance between Emmons and Mason, and it would not be surprising if he sees significant time as well, or even starts the game. The main question with Charles is his relative lack of experience, despite his age. He has just three career carries.

Defensively, the names to know are all over the field. This is a deep unit. Tim Bonner (three sacks, seven tackles for loss in 2018) and Leighton McCarthy (39 tackles, three TFL) bookend the line and look ready to serve as the primary pass rushers on this roster. There's talent on the back end as well, where James Pierce (55 tackles, nine pass breakups) serves as a lockdown corner, with safety Zyon Gilbert (51 tackles) as a steady last line of defense.

The star of the defense is, once again, Smith. He led the team in tackles in 2018 with 86 stops, including 5½ for loss. He is the best tackler on the team and one of the more versatile linebackers Ohio State will play this season. You are not going to see him spending a ton of time in the backfield, but he's as solid as they come and should rack up double-digit tackles.



Ohio State vs. Florida Atlantic

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Projected Depth Charts

How We See It

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...

SS 24 ZYON GILBERT, JR. (30 Armani-Eli Adams, R=Fr.)

OLB 7 RASHAD SMITH, SR. (54 Hosea Barnwell, Jr.)

MLB 36 AKILEIS LEROY, JR. (25 Chase Lasater, So.)

NICKEL 9 QURAN HAFIZ, JR. (29 Korel Smith, Jr.)

FS 27 DA'VON BROWN, SR. (32 Teja Young, So.)

CB 26 CHRIS TOOLEY, SR. (12 Diashun Moss, Jr.)

DE 45 TIM BONNER, SO. (92 Marcell Southall, Jr.)

DT 91 NOAH JEFFERSON, 5TH-SR. (11 Ray Ellis, 5th-Sr.)

DT 42 WILL DAVIS, SR. (52 Jaylen Joyner, So.)

DE 13 LEIGHTON MCCARTHY, JR. (33 David Belvin, Sr.)

CB 23 JAMES PIERRE, JR. (15 Meiko Dotson, 5th-Sr.)

X 10 BINJIMEN VICTOR, SR. (5 Garrett Wilson, Fr.)

LT 75 Thayer Munford, Jr. (58 Joshua Alabi, 5th-Sr.)

LG 73 Jonah Jackson, 5th-Sr. (61 Gavin Cupp, Jr.)

C 71 Josh Myers, So. (77 Harry Miller, Fr.)

RG 76 BRANDEN BOWEN, 5TH-SR. (74 Max Wray, R-Fr.)

RT 78 NICHOLAS PETIT-FRERE, R-FR. (11 AUSTIN MACK, SR. (17 Chris Olave, So.)

Z 11 AUSTIN MACK, SR. (17 Chris Olave, So.)

P 91 DRUE CHRISMAN, JR.

QB 1 JUSTIN FIELDS, SO. (12 Gunnar Hoak, Jr. OR 4 Chris Chugunov, 5th-Sr.)

TE 89 LUKE FARRELL, JR. (13 Rashod Berry, 5th-Sr. OR 88 Jeremy Ruckert, So.)

K 95 BLAKE HAUBEIL, JR.

RB 2 J.K. DOBBINS, JR. (30 Demario McCall, Jr. OR 33 Master Teague, R-Fr.)

H 14 K.J. HILL, 5TH-SR. (80 C.J. Saunders, 5th-Sr. OR 26 Jaelen Gill, R-Fr.)

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE VS. FLORIDA ATLANTIC RUSH DEFENSE

Florida Atlantic may not have a more glaring weakness on its defense than up the middle. Expect Ohio State to take full advantage of that. There are two new defensive tackles, questions about middle linebacker Akileis Leroy and no real reason to think the Owls will be great at stopping the run this season. Linebacker Rashad Smith will pick up tackles, as will safety Zyon Gilbert, but it could be a very big day for quarterback Justin Fields and running back J.K. Dobbins. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

FLORIDA ATLANTIC RUSH OFFENSE VS. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

Ohio State's rush defense was not good by any means last season, but it was not the worst part of the defense either. The Buckeyes had rough outings against Maryland and Purdue on the ground, but it seems like those glitches have been mostly patched over, which should prevent a repeat performance in this game. Florida Atlantic head coach Lane Kiffin likes to use pre-play motion, so we should know almost immediately whether the Buckeyes have fixed the problems from last season. The Owls are breaking in a new running back, too, while the Buckeyes still have defensive tackles Robert Landers and Davon Hamilton manning the middle. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE VS. FLORIDA ATLANTIC PASS DEFENSE

This is probably the most competitive matchup of the game. Florida Atlantic has two very good cornerbacks in James Pierre and Chris Tooley and a great safety behind them in Gilbert. On top of that, the Owls primarily play out of the 4-2-5 defense, so they will have extra personnel to handle the pass. Ohio State will be starting a brand-new quarterback, so if Fields is not ready for week one, it could be an underwhelming performance in the air for him. Luckily, the receivers should help him settle in and give Ohio State the edge. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

FLORIDA ATLANTIC PASS OFFENSE VS. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Just like with the rush defense, we will know right away if the pass rush is not yet fixed from last year for Ohio State. Florida Atlantic does not have a massive over-the-top threat as it did last year, but Willie Wright, Harrison Bryant and the Owls' stable of long wideouts will give Ohio State trouble if the Buckeyes come out with three linebackers in man coverage as they did last season. This should be a solid first test for the new look defensive backfield. And if they struggle, Ohio State can again lean on its elite defensive line, which could become a theme this season if the back seven has any growing pains. **EDGE: EVEN**

SPECIAL TEAMS

Ohio State seems primed for a consistent and solid year of special teams, with punter Drue Chrisman and kicker Blake Haubeil back for another season. Florida Atlantic's situation is nowhere near as solid, as both kicker Vlad Rivas and punter Sebastian Riella struggled last season. Special teams is not just kickers and punters, but the Buckeyes seem to have the advantage in other areas as well. Quite a bit of kick and punt coverage comes down to athleticism, and – simply put – Ohio State has more of that than FAU does. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

INTANGIBLES

The Buckeyes have a brand-new head coach, while the Owls' head coach has been around the block about 20 times – for good and for bad. On its face, this question seems pretty obvious, but at the key positions, there is a bit more to debate. First off, Florida Atlantic has a young quarterback, just like Ohio State, and an inexperienced offensive line, just like Ohio State, but unlike the Buckeyes, FAU is without stars at wide receiver or running back. We give FAU the edge because Ryan Day is coaching his first game as a full-time head coach, but it is still a pretty close call. **EDGE: FLORIDA ATLANTIC**

STAFF PREDICTION

This is a great first game for Ohio State, because Florida Atlantic does just about everything that Ohio State struggled against last year well but does not have the talent to seriously threaten the Buckeyes. That means that we can see how Ohio State handles a good slot receiver, an offense with a lot of motion, good pass-rushing ends and two very solid cornerbacks. This will not be the prettiest win of the season because of the way FAU is built, but it shouldn't be close either. Ohio State takes an early lead and rolls late despite a few hiccups throughout the game. **OHIO STATE, 48-14**

WHEN FLORIDA ATLANTIC HAS THE BALL...

SS 4 JORDAN FULLER, SR. (15 Josh Proctor, So.)

WLB 39 MALIK HARRISON, SR. (19 Dallas Gant, So.)

MLB 7 TERADJA MITCHELL, SO. (5 Baron Browning, Jr.)

SLB 20 PETE WERNER, JR. (36 K'Vaughan Pope, So.)

FS 24 SHAUN WADE, SO. (10 Amir Riep, Jr.)

CB 1 JEFFREY OKUDAH, JR. (12 Sevyn Banks, So.)

DE 2 CHASE YOUNG, JR. (11 Tyreke Smith, So.)

DT 9 JASHON CORNELL, 5TH-SR. (6 Taron Vincent, So.)

DE 18 JONATHON COOPER, SR. (54 Tyler Friday, So.)

CB 25 BRENDON WHITE, JR. (23 Jahsen Wint, Jr.)

BULLET 3 DAMON ARNETTE, 5TH-SR. (13 Tyreke Johnson, R-Fr.)

X 85 JOHN MITCHELL, SR. (86 Ronald Patterson, So.)

LT 73 BRANDON WALTON, SR. (72 Doug Johnson, Fr.)

LG 51 JUNIOR DIAZ, 5TH-SR. (71 Jake Jones, Jr.)

C 51 JUNIOR DIAZ, 5TH-SR. (71 Jake Jones, Jr.)

RG 63 NICK WEBER, SO. (50 Ean Biancardi, Jr.)

RT 75 Marquice Robinson, R-Fr. (72 Doug Johnson, Fr.)

Y 82 TAVARIS HARRISON, 5TH-SR. (83 James Brunson, 5th-Sr.)

P 96 SEBASTIAN RIELLA, SO.

QB 2 CHRIS ROBISON, SO. (6 NICK TRONTI, So.)

TE 40 HARRISON BRYANT, SR. (10 John Raine, Sr.)

K 44 VLADIMIR RIVAS, SO.

RB 4 B.J. EMMONS, JR. (26 CHAUNCEY MASON, Jr.)

H 1 WILLIE WRIGHT, JR. (22 Ladante Harris, 5th-Sr.)

– Depth charts compiled by Andrew Lind and Patrick Mayhorn

OSU Faces Pair Of Rough Patches On Schedule

By WYATT CROSHER
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Looking back at the past two season schedules for Ohio State, both can be summed up with two words: trap game.

Whether it be the backbreaking second loss of the year against Iowa in 2017 or the sole blemish on the record with a brutal defeat from Purdue last season, the other wins, sometimes against significant opponents, have frequently been overshadowed by a defeat against a lesser opponent in the middle of the schedule.

This time around, the 2019 Ohio State football schedule appears to have a pair of spots in the schedule – games 5-8 and 11-12 – that will be the warning areas for the Buckeyes in the quest for a perfect season.

With a new quarterback, new head coach and almost entirely new defensive coaching staff, there are a lot of questions on Ohio State's side of things. But looking ahead to this set of 12 games, the schedule appears to have a good balance of tough opponents that will add to a potential College Football Playoff résumé if the record holds up.

This is mainly in part to getting possibly the three toughest Big Ten West opponents, as well as a tricky nonconference matchup early with Cincinnati.

There are also two off weeks this season, one between Michigan State and Northwestern, the other between

Wisconsin and Maryland, allowing Ohio State to gain some potentially important recovery times late in the year for the difficult final games.

Here are brief previews for all 12 matchups that Ohio State will be facing on its 2019 schedule, with a full preview of the Buckeyes' opening matchup against Florida Atlantic on Page 46.

Florida Atlantic, Aug. 31 – Head coach Lane Kiffin and company head into Columbus to open Ohio State's season, and although it's not quite the cakewalk Oregon State was a season ago, it is a more than winnable matchup.

Kiffin led the Owls to an 11-3 record in his first season at the helm after a 3-9 season the year prior, but Florida Atlantic hit a sophomore slump, falling to 5-7 in 2018. This wasn't due to a lack of offense, which finished No. 14 in the NCAA with 478.8 yards per game, led by a running back tandem of Devin Singletary and Kerrith Whyte.

Now both of those backs are on NFL teams, and it will be up to quarterback Chris Robison, who finished last season with 2,540 passing yards, 12 touchdowns and 12 interceptions, to pick up the slack – maybe.

Robison was suspended throughout the spring with a sexual battery charge and is in a battle with Nick Tronti for the starting position. Regardless of who is controlling the offense, Ohio State should have no problem warming up its offense against the No. 92 scoring defense in the country

from 2018.

The Owls' senior linebacker Rashad Smith could cause some issues, as he led the team with 86 tackles and four interceptions.

Cincinnati, Sept. 7 – Just a year prior, a home matchup for the Buckeyes against Cincinnati would have looked like a stomping. Not anymore. Former Ohio State coach Luke Fickell went from 4-8 to 11-2 in his second season with the Bearcats and did so with strong play on both sides.

Cincinnati's 34.9 points per game and 17.2 points allowed per game were both top 25 in the NCAA, and the Bearcats topped off their season with a 35-31 win in the Military Bowl against Virginia Tech and a No. 24 ranking in the final AP poll.

Redshirt sophomore quarterback Desmond Ridder is a threat with his arm and his legs, and he was helped by 1,329 rush yards, 232 receiving yards and 20 total touchdowns from his running back, junior Michael Warren, who also returns.

The Bearcats also gained a pair of Ohio State receivers in the transfer portal in Blue Smith and Garyn Prater, the first of whom should make an immediate impact.

Cincy's defense was stout in 2018, but it will now have to play without Cortez Broughton and the 17½ tackles for loss and 6½ sacks he provided.

Indiana, Sept. 14 – In 31 years of matchups between the Hoosiers and the Buckeyes, the only thing Indiana has to show for them is a tie in 1990. Ohio State has 24 straight wins (if you count the vacat-

ed 2010 season). That's 26 games since Indiana's last victory. Is there any reason for that to change in 2019?

Well, no, but crazier things have happened. Two of the past three matchups in Bloomington, where this upcoming matchup will take place, were decided by a touchdown or less, so maybe Tom Allen and likely starting quarterback Peyton Ramsey can make some magic happen on their home field.

A spark may more likely come from Stevie Scott, a running back coming off 1,137 rushing yards and 10 touchdowns in his freshman season. The spark is less likely to come from the Hoosiers' defense, which ranked in the bottom 50 in every major statistical category.

Miami (OH), Sept. 21 – You thought 31 years was bad, how about 115? Miami and Ohio State have played only five times in over a century and Miami has never beaten the Buckeyes in the history of its program. Even more fun, the 80 points OSU scored in the 1904 matchup doubles the RedHawks' combined points total from all five matchups.

Miami had a serviceable 6-6 season in 2018 behind a slightly above-average defense. But it also has lost starting quarterback Gus Ragland, running back Alonzo Smith, and star linebacker Brad Koenig, whose first-team All-MAC showing included 101 tackles, five sacks, four forced fumbles and three interceptions.

The RedHawks are amid a quarterback competition that features a handful of

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FOOTBALL PREVIEW: OPPONENT OVERVIEW

underclassmen, but junior wide receiver Jack Sorenson is back and able to give any quarterback a safety net after a season with 742 yards and two touchdowns.

This will be a season of question marks for Miami. Don't expect any once-in-a-century level upsets here, especially with Ohio State at home.

Nebraska, Sept. 28 – This is the matchup many have pegged as one of Ohio State's toughest matchups, and for good reason. Don't let last season's 4-8 record fool you. Scott Frost's Cornhuskers really started to turn a corner at the end of 2018, and that was seen in a tight 36-31 loss to the Buckeyes.

Adrian Martinez is the reason for much of the buzz after shining in his freshman season with 2,617 passing yards, 629 rushing yards and 25 total touchdowns. He shone so much, he is currently fifth in Heisman odds at 12 to 1, according to Bovada.

There are other playmakers on both sides of the ball as well, with junior wide receiver J.D. Spielman hauling in eight touchdowns and 818 yards a season ago, and senior linebacker Mohamed Barry bringing his team-leading 112 tackles back.

But the Cornhuskers' defense ranked in the bottom 40 with 433.5 yards allowed per game and will need to make significant improvements, unless Martinez can carry the entire team on his back.

Ohio State will need to be prepared for this one, as Lincoln is never an easy place to play, and Martinez already broke out for more than 300 yards and three total touchdowns a season ago in Ohio Stadium. This time, on the road, should be a big test for the Buckeyes before the halfway point of the season.

Michigan State, Oct. 5 – Week two of a tough four-game stretch for the Buckeyes involves a home matchup with Mark Dantonio's Spartans, a year after MSU finished with one of the best defenses in the country, giving up the fewest rush yards per game and eighth-fewest points allowed per game.

The problem, however, was that Michigan State's offense scored the fifth-fewest points per game and had some of the worst numbers of any team in the NCAA.

But the pressure will be on for Ohio State to contain senior quarterback Brian Lewerke, who is due for a return to form after an injury-riddled 2018.

The same defensive stars – linebacker Joe Bachie and defensive end Kenny Willekes – have returned for their senior season, leading a defense that should stay as strong as before.

Nebraska is the hot pick to cause troubles for Ohio State, but nobody should look past the Spartans if they can improve the offense even slightly. The Buckeyes have the home-field advantage in this night game, but with the easier workload ahead of this matchup, Michigan State definitely has a chance to make a splash here.

Northwestern, Oct. 18 – Following an off week, Ohio State's schedule likely doesn't get much easier as it heads to Evanston, Ill., for a Friday night road game against the Wildcats.

Pat Fitzgerald has his strong defensive corps mostly returning after an 8-1 conference record that led to a Big Ten title game matchup against the Buckeyes. A trio of juniors in linebackers Blake Gallagher and Paddy Fisher and defensive back J.R. Pace is going to be huge while the offense works on improving from where it was last season.

Running back Isaiah Bowser was a bright spot as a true freshman in an other-

wise subpar offense, but now the Wildcats live in a post-Clayton Thorson world at quarterback and will likely be led by former five-star prospect and Clemson commit Hunter Johnson at QB, though he has not been named the starter just yet. T.J. Green remains in contention.

There are no major pieces gone from the team that both lost to Akron and then won the Big Ten West. The Buckeyes have an extra week to prepare, as do the Wildcats, and both will likely need it for an intriguing matchup that, again, is not lopsided in favor of Ohio State.

Wisconsin, Oct. 26 – This one might as well be called Ohio State vs. Jonathan Taylor.

While it will be seen if Jack Coan or Graham Mertz can step up as an improvement over Alex Hornibrook at quarterback, which shouldn't be hard, Taylor is the focal point of this offense, and it's not close.

Taylor rushed for 2,194 yards on 7.1 yards per carry and finished with 16 touchdowns on the ground last season. If you think that was a miracle season, look back at his freshman year when he rushed for 1,977 yards and 13 touchdowns on 6.6 yards per carry.

Taylor is a Heisman contender, and he will have to play as for the Badgers to make something happen against Ohio State in the 'Shoe.

Wisconsin remains a strong defensive unit, finishing No. 29 with 344.2 yards allowed per game. But make no mistake, the Badgers need a big day from Taylor, or they may not have a chance against the Buckeyes.

Maryland, Nov. 9 – Following off week No. 2, Ohio State might be able to catch a relative breather with the next two matchups. The same could have been expected in 2018, but we all know how that went, with a 52-51 overtime thriller that easily could have gone to the Terrapins.

Maryland's running game shone behind Anthony McFarland, who finished his freshman season with 1,034 yards on 7.9 yards per carry. The pass game, on the other hand, was mostly bad but should get a boost from redshirt junior Josh Jackson, a transfer from Virginia Tech who threw for nearly 3,000 yards and 20 touchdowns as a freshman.

Former Alabama offensive coordinator Michael Locksley is the new head coach and has offensive weapons at his disposal, but he will need to improve a defensive front that was mediocre at best in 2018.

Rutgers, Nov. 16 – Here are some numbers: Ohio State has won all five of its matchups against Rutgers, which all span from 2014-18. Since Chris Ash has taken over, the Scarlet Knights have been outscored 166-3 by the Buckeyes.

Rutgers started 2018 1-0 and finished 2018 1-11. It started 2018 outscoring opponents 35-7 after a week one victory against Texas State. It then proceeded to get outscored 370-127 for the rest of the season.

Quarterback Artur Sitkowski had the worst statistical game of any college football quarterback this millennium who has thrown more than 15 passes, with a performance of 2 for 16, 8 yards, zero touchdowns and four interceptions against Maryland.

Sitkowski may lose his job to Texas Tech transfer McLane Carter, and either quarterback will be helped by a solid duo of running backs in Raheem Blackshear and Isaih Pacheco, who combined for more than 1,000 yards.

But is any of it enough to help the worst offense in college football and bottom 50 defense, even with the Ohio State matchup in Piscataway, N.J.? Almost certainly not.

Penn State, Nov. 23 – Ohio State finishes its season with two of the toughest matchups on the schedule in back-to-back weeks, starting with a home matchup against the Nittany Lions.

Penn State loses Trace McSorley and Miles Sanders, two huge blows to the offense, but quarterback Sean Clifford and running back Ricky Slade have proved to be valuable in prior limited action.

K.J. Hamler, off a very strong redshirt freshman season, is back to help Clifford out, but it is the defense that makes James Franklin's group one to fear this season.

Linebacker Micah Parsons, a five-star prospect and top Ohio State target, was dominant in his freshman year, leading the team with 83 tackles. Junior defensive end Yetur Gross-Matos also returns and should be expected to be one of the best in the country at his position. In 2018, Gross-Matos finished with 54 tackles, 20 tackles for loss and eight sacks.

The Nittany Lions always give Ohio State a hard time, with each of the past three matchups coming down to the final possession. McSorley will go down as a great for the program, and Sanders was an excellent back coming after Saquon Barkley, but if Penn State has figured out its offense by this late in the season, expect that to become four straight exciting matchups.

Michigan, Nov. 30 – As always, the biggest game will come at the end, and for the second straight year, Michigan looks like a team that is right there with the Buckeyes in terms of talent, and this time they get the Buckeyes in the Big House.

Quarterback Shea Patterson returns for his final season, coming off a year completing 64.6 percent of his passes, throwing

for 2,600 yards and 22 touchdowns with seven interceptions. The Wolverines also return both star wide receivers in Donovan Peoples-Jones and Nico Collins. The junior duo combined for 85 catches, more than 1,200 yards and 14 touchdowns.

The offense was the "weak point" for Michigan a season ago, finishing only No. 49 with 419.5 yards per game, while the defense flourished, allowing the second-fewest yards in college football.

But there are many major contributors the Wolverines are going to have to replace heading into 2019, with Devin Bush, Rashan Gary, Chase Winovich and David Long all heading to the NFL.

Jim Harbaugh has a strong unit that will be able to fill those spots, but it will have to be seen if the replacements will simply be good, or if they can excel in ways needed for Michigan to finally end the cold spell against Ohio State.

Harbaugh and company were favored last season heading to the 'Shoe then proceeded to get handily defeated 62-39 by the Buckeyes for their seventh straight defeat.

The question that will be on the minds of many in terms of Ohio State-Michigan is if Harbaugh will ever have a better opportunity to end his winless run against the Buckeyes than he did in 2018.

The game will be Ryan Day's first test with this rivalry as head coach and one of the first real times he can start to build his legacy to Ohio State fans.

The Buckeyes have a schedule that is seemingly difficult at times but manageable enough with off weeks and easier games between them so that it seems difficult, but not out of the question, to run the table.

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BSB Expectations High Despite New Head Coach

As usual at Ohio State with a new season on the immediate horizon, expectations are sky-high in Columbus. Despite the change at head coach from surefire Hall of Famer Urban Meyer to first-timer Ryan Day, and despite large swaths of inexperience all over the roster, there is still a feeling of national title hope at Ohio State, and for good reason. The Buckeyes, are, after all, one of the most talented teams in the country, entering a season with a less-than-impossible schedule. New coach or not, inexperienced or not, the expectations are high, and that's simply the Ohio State way.

Just like Buckeye Nation at large, the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff thinks very highly of the new-look Buckeyes. Our staff is in agreement that there should be little to no drop-off in production this season, thanks in large part to that new-look staff on the defensive side of the ball adjusting the silver bullets. We have a healthy amount of questions about Justin Fields, the offensive line and the linebackers, but as mentioned, Ohio State is one of the most talented teams in the country. It is very hard to question that.

The staff took a similar approach to predicting Ohio State last season. With Urban Meyer off the sidelines for games one, two and three, there was still little concern about that early slate, and as it turns out, the lack of concern was warranted. Ohio State won all three games under then-interim head coach Ryan Day, a stretch that the BSB staff had slightly split feelings on, but mostly nailed.

On the whole, it was a solid showing for the staff here at BSB. Each staffer hit on Ohio State's regular-season record of 11-1, though no one knew what awaited the Buckeyes in West Lafayette, with loss predictions ranging from TCU to Penn State and Michigan State. Less impressive: the bowl projections. Each staffer called for a playoff berth for the 11-1 Buckeyes, which, as we know, was not in the cards for Ohio State, as it instead headed to the Rose Bowl, where it defeated Washington.

We got back on track with a few of our conference predictions, with everyone correctly calling Ohio State's Big Ten title game victory, though no one saw that win coming

against Northwestern (all four picks were for Wisconsin).

Finally, we hit on a whopping zero conference award picks, though part of that can be chalked up to the injury to Nick Bosa, whom all four staffers had picked as their Defensive Player of the Year. However, no one saw coming the rise of Dwayne Haskins to Offensive Player of the Year, Devin Bush for Defensive Player of the Year, Pat Fitzgerald for Coach of the Year, or Rondale Moore as Freshman of the Year.

Despite our continually wrong predictions, we're at it again in 2019, with four brand-new predictions from Wyatt Crosher, Joe Dempsey, Andrew Lind and Patrick Mayhorn.

Crosher: Year One Playoff Run

New head coach. Unproven quarterback. These are usually major hurdles for a team to overcome, and yet I think Ohio State will do exactly that. Ryan Day may be entering his first year at the helm, but those three games he coached in 2018 may end up being more beneficial than they seemed at the time.

The Buckeyes have a tough four-game stretch against Nebraska, Michigan State, Northwestern and Wisconsin, and I believe they can come out of that undefeated. The Friday night road game against the Wildcats, whom I have atop the Big Ten West, will be the hardest matchup, but with an off week prior, I think Ohio State survives it.

Speaking more on the Wildcats, many seem to be heading into this season looking at Northwestern's 2018 as a fluke. But the Wildcats bring back much of the star power on the defense, and five-star Clemson transfer Hunter Johnson is likely to be their new starting quarterback.

Pat Fitzgerald eked out multiple narrow victories in 2018, but this team in 2019 feels like one that can legitimately pick up double-digit wins, even in the Big Ten.

Back to Ohio State, I expect it to have one loss, coming at the hands of Penn State, a team that looks prepared to have a loaded defense behind Yetur Gross-Matos and Micah Parsons. Yes, Ohio State is at home for this one, but I think this will be yet another matchup between these two that will come

down to the wire.

By the 11th game of the season, I expect Penn State to have its offense figured out, which may be enough with its loaded defense to give the Buckeyes their first loss. Following that defeat, Ohio State should come out even more motivated to extend its win streak against Michigan to eight, giving the Wolverines three losses: Ohio State, Notre Dame and either Penn State or Michigan State.

Still, with one close loss to a very good Penn State team, which I see losing twice, Ohio State, after defeating Northwestern again in the Big Ten championship, should have the résumé to make the College Football Playoff for the first time in three seasons. I will say should, because as the past has shown us, nothing is confirmed with the playoff.

Looking at the rest of the Big Ten, I think Michigan has been a bit overhyped, and I expect the defense to take a hit after losing so many key players from a season ago. Shea Patterson and the pass game should improve under a new coordinator, and Zach Charbonnet, my pick for Freshman of the Year, could still make an immediate impact at running back.

I also think the Spartans will have a dramatically improved season with the same stout defense and a healthy Brian Lewerke. In the West, I think Adrian Martinez is the real deal and can will an otherwise OK Nebraska team to nine wins.

Minnesota, Purdue and Iowa all feel like they can be a win or two different in either direction, as they each are teams potentially on the rise in the Big Ten West, but I do not see enough to separate any of them specifically as one that can contend to make the championship game.

While I would love to give Rutgers a chance, I just do not see enough to make it happen, aside from a strong running back duo at its disposal.

While Fields should shine for the Buckeyes, J.K. Dobbins will return to his freshman form and be a dominant force throughout the season. He should finish No. 2 for Offensive Player of the Year, but after

two unbelievably impressive seasons, I cannot deny Wisconsin running back Jonathan Taylor from winning this.

Defensively, I think either Parsons or Gross-Matos will take the award, with Ohio State's Chase Young also having a strong chance if he can dominate on the line.

While I don't have an Ohio State player winning an award, if Day can win the Big Ten in his first season at the helm, I can't see any reason why he would not get picked as Coach of the Year.

With the Buckeyes in the playoff, likely losing to an Alabama or Clemson, that leaves the door open for another Big Ten team to make the Rose Bowl, which I believe will go to the Nittany Lions. Northwestern should also get a great bowl game for the program in the Citrus Bowl.

Michigan would likely be disappointed with a finish in the Pinstripe Bowl and could put coach Jim Harbaugh on quite the hot seat.

Dempsey: OSU Goes Undefeated

From an outside perspective it is understandable why media outlets would think Ohio State would be set up for a major drop-off. Given the fact that the Buckeyes lost three captains at wide receiver, a Big Ten record-setting quarterback, a former 1,000-yard rusher and a Hall of Fame-caliber coach, many signs point to a letdown season for the Scarlet and Gray.

A closer look at Ohio State's roster provides some indication that the team may not be as poorly off as it may seem.

On offense, junior running back J.K. Dobbins is back after consecutive 1,000-yard seasons to begin his Buckeye career. Although losing four full-time starters on the offensive line may seem troublesome on paper, a closer look indicates Ohio State may be better off than it appears.

Junior left tackle Thayer Munford returns and is a force in run blocking and pass protection on the blind side. Joining him as another offensive lineman with meaningful game experience is redshirt sophomore right guard Wyatt Davis, who concluded the 2018 season as a starter. Fifth-year senior

BSB SEASON PREDICTIONS

How We See The 2019 Big Ten Race

Here is a look at how members of the BSB staff predict the Big Ten football season:

| Wyatt Crosher East | | | | Joe Dempsey East | | | | Andrew Lind East | | | | Patrick Mayhorn East | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Record | Conf. | Bowl | | Record | Conf. | Bowl | | Record | Conf. | Bowl | | Record | Conf. | Bowl | |
| Ohio State | 11-1 | 8-1 | CFP | Ohio State | 12-0 | 9-0 | CFP | Ohio State | 12-0 | 9-0 | CFP | Ohio State | 10-2 | 7-2 | Rose |
| Penn State | 10-2 | 7-2 | Rose | Michigan | 11-1 | 8-1 | Rose | Michigan | 10-2 | 8-1 | Rose | Michigan | 10-2 | 7-2 | Orange |
| Michigan | 9-3 | 7-2 | Pinstripe | Penn State | 9-3 | 6-3 | Outback | Michigan State | 9-3 | 6-3 | Outback | Penn State | 10-2 | 7-2 | Outback |
| Michigan State | 9-3 | 6-3 | TaxSlayer | Michigan State | 8-4 | 5-4 | TaxSlayer | Penn State | 7-5 | 4-5 | Redbox | Michigan State | 8-4 | 6-3 | TaxSlayer |
| Maryland | 4-8 | 2-7 | | Maryland | 4-8 | 2-7 | | Maryland | 4-8 | 2-7 | | Indiana | 5-7 | 2-7 | |
| Indiana | 4-8 | 1-8 | | Indiana | 4-8 | 1-8 | | Indiana | 4-8 | 1-8 | | Maryland | 3-9 | 2-7 | |
| Rutgers | 2-10 | 0-9 | | Rutgers | 2-10 | 0-9 | | Rutgers | 2-10 | 0-9 | | Rutgers | 3-9 | 2-7 | |
| West | Record | Conf. | Bowl | West | Record | Conf. | Bowl | West | Record | Conf. | Bowl | West | Record | Conf. | Bowl |
| Northwestern | 10-2 | 7-2 | Citrus | Nebraska | 10-2 | 7-2 | Citrus | Purdue | 9-3 | 7-2 | Citrus | Wisconsin | 10-2 | 7-2 | Citrus |
| Nebraska | 9-3 | 6-3 | Outback | Northwestern | 9-3 | 6-3 | Holiday | Nebraska | 8-4 | 6-3 | Holiday | Iowa | 9-3 | 7-2 | RedBox |
| Wisconsin | 8-4 | 5-4 | Holiday | Iowa | 7-5 | 5-4 | Pinstripe | Northwestern | 8-4 | 6-3 | TaxSlayer | Nebraska | 8-4 | 5-4 | Holiday |
| Minnesota | 7-5 | 4-5 | Redbox | Wisconsin | 7-5 | 4-5 | Redbox | Iowa | 8-4 | 5-4 | Pinstripe | Northwestern | 7-5 | 5-4 | QuickLane |
| Iowa | 6-6 | 4-5 | Armed Forces | Purdue | 6-6 | 4-5 | Quick Lane | Minnesota | 8-4 | 5-4 | Quicklane | Minnesota | 6-6 | 3-6 | Pinstripe |
| Purdue | 6-6 | 4-5 | Music City | Minnesota | 6-6 | 3-6 | First Responders | Wisconsin | 7-5 | 4-5 | Armed Forces | Purdue | 6-6 | 3-6 | Armed Forces |
| Illinois | 3-9 | 1-8 | | Illinois | 4-8 | 1-8 | | Illinois | 4-8 | 1-8 | | Illinois | 3-9 | 0-9 | |
| Big Ten Title Game Winner: Ohio State | | | | Big Ten Title Game Winner: Ohio State | | | | Big Ten Title Game Winner: Ohio State | | | | Big Ten Title Game Winner: Ohio State | | | |
| AWARD WINNERS | | | | AWARD WINNERS | | | | AWARD WINNERS | | | | AWARD WINNERS | | | |
| Offensive POY: Jonathan Taylor, Wisconsin | | | | Offensive POY: Justin Fields, Ohio State | | | | Offensive POY: Rondale Moore, Purdue | | | | Offensive POY: Rondale Moore, Purdue | | | |
| Defensive POY: Yetur Gross-Matos, Penn State | | | | Defensive POY: A.J. Epenosa, Iowa | | | | Defensive POY: Chase Young, Ohio State | | | | Defensive POY: Chase Young, Ohio State | | | |
| Coach of the Year: Ryan Day, Ohio State | | | | Coach of the Year: Ryan Day, Ohio State | | | | Coach of the Year: Jeff Brohm, Purdue | | | | Coach of the Year: Paul Chryst, Wisconsin | | | |
| Fresh. POY: Zach Charbonnet, Michigan | | | | Fresh. POY: Wandale Robinson, Nebraska | | | | Fresh. POY: Isaiah Williams, Illinois | | | | Fresh. POY: Wandale Robinson, Nebraska | | | |

Branden Bowen also returns with starting experience from 2017 before injuries set him back. Now healthy, Bowen is competing for the right tackle spot with redshirt freshman Nicholas Petit-Frere, who was the No. 1 tackle nationally in the 2018 class. Another Buckeye who not only started but thrived was Rutgers graduate transfer Jonah Jackson, who earned honorable-mention All-Big Ten honors and will start at left guard.

Defensively, the Buckeyes return junior defensive end Chase Young, who was hobbled with injuries most of his sophomore campaign. Despite the injuries, Young amassed 10½ sacks and is one of the most

feared pass rushers in the country. The notable losses on defense were cornerback Kendall Sheffield and defensive tackle Dre'mont Jones. Ohio State is not in a hole at those positions, however, as Damon Arnette returned for his fifth year, and junior Jeffrey Okudah and redshirt sophomore Shaun Wade have valuable experience at corner. At defensive tackle, Ohio State returns a lot of experience with fifth-year seniors Davon Hamilton, Robert "B.B." Landers and Jashon Cornell, junior Haskell Garrett and sophomores Taron Vincent and Tommy Togiai.

Many pundits do not expect Ohio State to make the College Football Playoff or

even win the Big Ten. I would be surprised if Ohio State did not win the Big Ten, and I believe for the first time in three years the conference champion will go to the CFP. Ohio State will take on an interesting and challenging schedule featuring some vastly inferior opponents as well as tough tasks on the road.

Ohio State takes on the Bearcats of Cincinnati, coached by former Buckeye player and coach Luke Fickell. Cincinnati ranked No. 13 against the run last season, allowing just 113 rushing yards per game. However, the combination of sophomore quarterback Justin Fields and Dobbins is a lethal running

attack that the Bearcats may not be suited to stop – it's much easier said than done.

The Buckeyes will then travel to Nebraska for what may be their toughest test of the season. Nebraska is led by talented dual-threat sophomore quarterback Adrian Martinez, and Ohio State will have to defeat the Huskers, who lost only 36-31 in Columbus last season, in Lincoln, Nebraska. Ohio State travels to Northwestern for a Friday night nationally televised rematch of the 2018 Big Ten championship. Northwestern and head coach Pat Fitzgerald seek revenge on Ryan

Continued On Page 52

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Buckeyes End Season In Familiar Territory

Continued From Page 51

Day and the Buckeyes, with transfer quarterback Hunter Johnson, a former five-star recruit from Clemson, at the helm.

Another challenging task for Ohio State could be Penn State at home. The Buckeyes and the Nittany Lions have seen their games go down to the wire, with the Buckeyes winning by one point in comeback victories each of the past two seasons. Penn State is more set up for a down year than Ohio State, however, losing quarterback Trace McSorley and numerous talented players.

All eyes will be on Ann Arbor, Michigan, the weekend after Thanksgiving when Ohio State takes on the Wolverines for what could potentially be the deciding game for the Big Ten East title.

The Maize and Blue return quarterback Shea Patterson and four all-conference offensive linemen, and the matchup could potentially decide who goes to the Big Ten championship, leading to a possible CFP appearance.

Lind: Run Ends With Familiar Fate

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day will exceed all expectations for his first season at the helm of the Buckeyes, but the story will have a familiar conclusion with a loss to Clemson in the College Football Playoff.

The road to get to that point should be fairly easy, despite potentially dangerous road games at Nebraska and Northwestern. Those games are already trendy upset picks, but I just don't see Day allowing his program to sleepwalk into its third straight night-game road loss in as many years (Iowa in 2017 and Purdue in 2018).

Ohio State has more blue-chip talent on its roster than any program in the country. It's simply a matter of avoiding those emotional pitfalls on the road.

The schedule is not set, but it's likely the Buckeyes will play the Cornhuskers at night. And with ESPN "College Gameday" already expected to be in attendance, everyone from the staff to the players should understand they'll be getting Nebraska's best shot.

The Cornhuskers have one of the nation's top young signal callers in sophomore quarterback Adrian Martinez. But I look at this game as Ohio State's first opportunity to prove itself on the defensive side of the ball, and the game won't be particularly close as a result.

The Northwestern game is interesting for a number of reasons: It's on a Friday night and comes immediately following an open week on the schedule.

I still vividly recall the Buckeyes struggling in the first game after an idle week under Jim Tressel. And though that was rectified under Urban Meyer, I'm looking forward to seeing how the team adjusts during and reacts to the time off.

The Wildcats have a difficult early-season schedule, especially in the weeks leading up to the Ohio State game (vs Michigan State, at Wisconsin, at Nebraska). They could either feel entirely defeated by the time the Buckeyes come to town or extremely confident in their chances of returning to the Big Ten championship – and in getting revenge for last year's title game defeat.

Ultimately, I think this game will be reminiscent of Ohio State's win over Northwestern in 2013. Back-and-forth until the second half, at which time the Buckeyes pull away and escape with a win.

The game against Penn State a little over a month later appears to be the next difficult test. The Nittany Lions are replacing a lot of talent on offense, but their defense will be among the conference's best. Luckily, that game is at home and should help Ohio State send its seniors out on a high note.

Michigan is the trendy pick to win the Big Ten, but I honestly think it's more so because most people are concerned about the Buckeyes breaking in a first-year head coach and new quarterback rather than sold on the Wolverines. There's nothing that suggests Michigan has closed the talent gap on Ohio State, either. This year's game won't be a blowout because it's in Ann Arbor, but the Buckeyes should win handily.

It's possible Ohio State will have a rematch in the conference championship, though I'd like to see Purdue make it instead. The Boilermakers' offense would make for a

formidable challenge, and the revenge factor would be a fun storyline, as well.

Get through that unscathed, and the No. 3 Buckeyes will take on SEC champion Georgia in the College Football Playoff. Justin Fields taking on his old team will be worth the price of admission and more.

Ohio State wins another classic in the Fiesta Bowl, setting up a date with Clemson – who knocked off one-loss Alabama in the Peach Bowl. But the Buckeyes fall just short of a national title and lose to the Tigers, 38-35.

The season is viewed as an overall success, but another loss to Clemson will be a difficult pill to swallow.

Mayhorn: Buckeyes Smell Roses

It took Urban Meyer seven seasons in Columbus to bring the Buckeyes to Pasadena for the Granddaddy of Them All. While the Rose Bowl is no longer what it used to be for Big Ten teams, it had still been a very long time between trips for the Buckeyes, and that means something to players, coaches and, most of all, fans who have fond memories of the Rose Bowl. In his final season, Urban Meyer finally brought a team to the Rose Bowl, when Ohio State capped his tenure back in January with a close win over Washington.

I think Meyer's successor, new head coach Ryan Day, gets to smell the roses in year one in Columbus.

Now, there are some questions about how excited Ohio State would be about a Rose Bowl berth in 2019, given that it is not a playoff game this season, and there was at least some frustration about that last season, but for year one, a Rose Bowl feels like a great accomplishment. That feeling gets even stronger when you consider the youth on this Ohio State roster. Given that a Rose Bowl berth likely means a Big Ten title, but too many regular-season losses to make the playoff, it really is not super hard to envision this outcome, though it is a bit dependent on other Big Ten teams.

Firstly, for a Rose Bowl berth, Ohio State will obviously need to get to the Big Ten title game, and that means that Penn State and Michigan have to remain what they have been

for the last few years – very good, not great.

If Michigan is fixed offensively under new offensive coordinator Josh Gattis, the Wolverines could steal that Big Ten East title game spot, at which point Ohio State would need to hope that the Big Ten West winner is not very good, and that Michigan is good enough to make the playoff with a win. In that case, an 11-1 or 10-2 Buckeye team with a loss to an undefeated or one loss Michigan team that makes the playoff would likely be sent to the Rose Bowl over the West representative. That's the less likely option.

More likely is the Nittany Lions and Wolverines remaining right around nine- or 10-win good, Ohio State running the table in the East but dropping a game or two to a West opponent and one of Michigan, Michigan State or Penn State. A 10-win Ohio State team with losses to Nebraska and Michigan State in the regular season does not make the playoff but could still go to the Big Ten title game. A win there sends them back to Pasadena, and that's what I have down for the Buckeyes.

Why? Well, ultimately, Ohio State is depending on a brand-new quarterback, three brand-new starters on the offensive line and large-scale defensive improvements that should come but may not happen right away. Change on defense almost always means growing pains, no matter how good any of those changes end up being, and growing pains early could spell trouble for Ohio State, because of its early schedule.

The Buckeyes should be able to get through FAU, Cincinnati, Indiana and Miami (OH), and while I think Cincinnati and Indiana will keep it close, I do not have any of those games as an upset alert. After those four, however, Ohio State has a massive ramp-up in opponent quality. The Buckeyes travel to Lincoln for what will almost certainly be a prime-time matchup with a rapidly improving Nebraska team. I think the Huskers get the best of Ohio State, though not in blowout fashion as we've seen in recent years against West foes.

The Buckeyes, stunned by their tough loss and facing their first real adversity under Ryan Day, lose a sloppy night game against the king of sloppy football, Mark Dantonio. At 4-2, the murmurs begin around Columbus, but the Buckeyes right the ship after a much needed week off and demolish Northwestern on the road before a similarly dominant performance against Wisconsin at home.

The Buckeyes begin to hit their peak entering November and take care of business easily against Maryland and Rutgers. With Penn State and Michigan both ahead of them in the Big Ten East standings by one game, Ohio State upsets the Nittany Lions at home, and crushes Michigan's dreams once again on the road, securing another Big Ten title berth. The surging Buckeyes firmly beat Wisconsin again but just miss out on the playoffs despite looking like the best team in the country in the second half of the season.

The Rose Bowl against Oregon feels a whole lot like the 2010 Rose Bowl against the Ducks. Justin Fields has fully hit his stride and looks primed to make a Heisman run next season, just as Terrelle Pryor did in 2010. There are a few questions about Ohio State's slow start, but optimism runs high around Ryan Day after the new head coach crafts an impressive in-season turnaround, capped by a late-season run rivaled only by 2014, and follows up his first season with a top-five recruiting class.

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FROM ONE GROUP OF SENIORS TO ANOTHER

SENIOR STRONGSM

To all Buckeye seniors,

When stepping out onto the field this season, take a moment to stand quietly and look out into the crowd, look to your teammates, to your coaches and to your fellow seniors. Remember the way these moments make you feel, as these are memories you will treasure for the rest of your life.

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No Big Changes For Buckeye TV, Radio Coverage

By PATRICK MAYHORN
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

As usual when it comes to Ohio State football, there will be coverage aplenty of the Buckeyes on both television and radio this fall.

Despite the change at head coach, that plethora of coverage this year will look a whole lot like it did last year, though there are a few minor changes to note. Most important of the changes is easily a change in the way Fox, the Big Ten's official TV partner, plans to handle big games this season.

Unlike in years past – and unlike with the other major broadcasters of college football such as ESPN, ABC, CBS and NBC – Fox announced this summer that its best programming will likely come in the noon slot, rather than the customary 7:30 or 8:00 p.m. slot.

Because Ohio State is consistently one of the largest draws, that means more noon games for the Buckeyes.

As of publication, Ohio State had six TV broadcasts set with channel and time, and of those six, three will move into that Fox noon slot. Those three are week one's matchup with FAU, week three against Indiana and, of course, the final week of the season against Michigan, which would most likely have come at noon regardless of Fox's standards.

The television provider and time for three other games have been announced as well. The Buckeyes will take on Cincinnati in week two at noon on ABC, Michigan State at 7:30 on either ESPN or ABC, and Northwestern at 8:30 on a Friday night, on Fox Sports 1.

For those unable to catch Ohio State's games on TV, ESPN offers online broadcasts if you have a cable log-in at WatchESPN, as does Fox with FoxSportsGo.

BSB will cover the release of any new times as they become available on BuckeyeSports.com, as well as in the publication as usual.

Keels, Lachey Back

It will be two familiar voices once again for Ohio State fans on the radio broadcast, as play-by-play expert Paul Keels and color analyst Jim Lachey are set to return to the radio booth for a 22nd straight season. Their broadcasts are available on the Ohio State IMG Sports Network, which now has 81 affiliates throughout Ohio and beyond.

Just as they were last year, the duo will be on air 90 minutes before every game to give a full breakdown of Ohio State's weekly opponent, with comments from players, coaches, analysts and everyone in between to paint a full picture of the day ahead for the Buckeyes.

During games, you can expect to hear from Keels and Lachey as well as sideline reporter Matt Andrews, entering his fourth year. You can also expect contributions by Skip Mosaic, entering his 35th season working the radio broadcast for Ohio State.

Ohio State radio broadcasts aren't just for those in Ohio, and if you have the TuneIn app or go to the TuneIn

website, you can listen to the call for free from anywhere in the country.

Prior to the games on Saturday morning, Mosaic will continue to host the "Ohio College Football Today" show as he has in years past.

During the week, the broadcasting is the same as last year. Mosaic will continue to host the Monday night "Buckeye Roundtable" with Keels and Lachey, along with various guest experts who will provide an inside look at the Buckeyes, upcoming opponents and, of course, Saturday's results.

With Urban Meyer out, Ryan Day is expected to host a similar weekly show as Meyer did. As it was last year, the call-in show airs from 12-1 p.m. on Thursday afternoon, and fans are encouraged to call in and ask the new head coach about his team.

Radio Coverage

For those in Columbus, WBNS 97.1 The Fan continues to increase coverage of the team just as it has in years past and will once again offer a wide array of shows prior to games, after games and during the week.

The gameday broadcast on 97.1 starts with "The Fan Pregame Show," hosted by Tim Hall and former Buckeye Jerry Rudzinski. Following that is "The Fan Tailgate Show," with Anthony Rothman, former Ohio State linebacker Joshua Perry and former Ohio State running back Chris "Beanie" Wells, which will broadcast from outside Ohio Stadium when the Buckeyes play at home.

After the game, 97.1 airs "The Postgame Show" with Jonathan "T-Bone" Smith and former Buckeye linebacker Anthony Schlegel.

During the week, WBNS has daily talk shows, including "Bishop & Laurinaitis" from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. starring Beau Bishop and former Buckeye James Laurinaitis, as well as "Carpenter & Rothman" with Bobby Carpenter and Anthony Rothman from noon to 3 p.m., "Common Man & T-Bone" from 3-6 p.m. and "The Buckeye Show" with Tim Hall and Brandon Beam from 6-8 p.m.

You can hear coverage on 97.1 The Fan in Columbus, 1460 AM or online at 971thefan.com.

Last year's primary competition for WBNS 97.1 the fan was at 105.7 The Zone, but The Zone is no more, after it was transformed into a rock station called "The Brew" after the conclusion of last season. That, however, does not mean that WBNS is without competition this season. Several alums of The Zone have moved to its sister station, 610 WTVN.

Among that group are Matt McCoy, who serves as the sports director at 610. The 610 coverage will be similar to how 105.7 covered the Buckeyes last season. McCoy joins the Joel Riley show from 5:30-9 a.m. each weekday, a show that occasionally features former Buckeye players and coaches.

During the season, according to McCoy, 610 will have a weekly Monday evening show from 7-8 p.m. called "Buckeye Rewind," featuring a rotating host, either Dave Maetzold or Eric Rieserer. On Rewind, the host will look at the weekend's Buckeye game, recap the performance and share thoughts on

2019 Ohio State Football Radio Affiliates

WBNS Radio in Columbus serves as the flagship station for the Ohio State Radio Network. Here is a look at the 81-station network.

| City | Station | Freq. | City | Station | Freq. |
|----------------|---------|-------|----------------|---------|-------|
| Akron | WAKR-AM | 1590 | Sandusky | WLEC-AM | 1450 |
| Athens | WATH* | 97.1 | Norwalk | WLKR-FM | 95.3 |
| Athens | WATH-AM | 970 | Lancaster | WLOH* | 104.5 |
| Bucyrus | WBEO-AM | 1540 | Logan | WLOH* | 99.3 |
| Columbus | WBNS-AM | 1460 | Somerset | WLOH* | 102.9 |
| Columbus | WBNS-FM | 97.1 | Lancaster | WLOH-AM | 1320 |
| Uhrichsville | WBTC* | 101.9 | Mansfield | WMAN-AM | 1400 |
| Uhrichsville | WBTC-AM | 1540 | Fredericktown | WMAN-FM | 98.3 |
| Steubenville | WCDK-FM | 106.3 | Marietta | WMOA* | 101.3 |
| Newark | WCLT* | 98.7 | Marietta | WMOA-AM | 1490 |
| Newark | WCLT-AM | 1430 | Ravenswood | WMOV* | 93.5 |
| Celina | WCSM-AM | 1350 | Ripley | WMOV* | 106.7 |
| Celina | WCSM-FM | 96.7 | Ravenswood | WMOV-AM | 1360 |
| Cincinnati | WDJO* | 99.5 | Marion | WMRN-AM | 1490 |
| Cincinnati | WDJO* | 107.9 | Archbold | WMTR-FM | 96.1 |
| Cincinnati | WDJO-AM | 1480 | Mt. Vernon | WMVO* | 100.9 |
| Elyria | WEOL-AM | 930 | Mt. Vernon | WMVO-AM | 1300 |
| Van Wert | WERT* | 104.3 | Sidney | WMVR-FM | 105.5 |
| Van Wert | WERT-AM | 1220 | Napoleon | WNDH-FM | 103.1 |
| Findlay | WFIN* | 99.5 | Youngstown | WNIO-AM | 1390 |
| Findlay | WFIN-AM | 1330 | Portsmouth | WNXT* | 95.7 |
| Fostoria | WFOB* | 105.7 | Portsmouth | WNXT-AM | 1260 |
| Fostoria | WFOB-AM | 1430 | Fremont | WOHF-FM | 92.1 |
| Ashtabula | WFUN-AM | 970 | Bellefontaine | WPKO-FM | 98.3 |
| Dayton | WGTV-FM | 92.9 | Piqua | WPTW* | 98.1 |
| Canton | WHBC-AM | 1480 | Piqua | WPTW-AM | 1570 |
| Zanesville | WHIZ* | 102.3 | Bucyrus | WQEL-FM | 92.7 |
| Zanesville | WHIZ-AM | 1240 | Wooster | WQKT-FM | 104.5 |
| Cambridge | WILE-FM | 97.7 | Marysville | WQTT* | 96.7 |
| Lima | WIMA-AM | 1150 | Marysville | WQTT-AM | 1270 |
| Dayton | WING-AM | 1410 | Georgetown | WRAC-FM | 103.1 |
| Ironton | WIRO-AM | 1230 | Coshocton | WTNS-FM | 99.3 |
| McConnelsville | WJAW-FM | 100.9 | Toledo | WTOD-FM | 106.5 |
| Dover | WJER* | 100.9 | Wheeling | WVLY* | 97.7 |
| Dover | WJER-AM | 1450 | Wheeling | WVLY-AM | 1370 |
| Millersburg | WKLM-FM | 95.3 | Greenfield | WVNU-FM | 97.5 |
| Cleveland | WKNR-AM | 850 | Waverly | WXIZ-FM | 100.9 |
| Paulding | WKSD-FM | 99.7 | Upper Sandusky | WYNT-FM | 95.9 |
| Kenton | WKTN-FM | 95.3 | Jackson | WYRO-FM | 98.7 |
| Wooster | WKVX-AM | 960 | Huntington | WZWB-AM | 1420 |
| Sandusky | WLEC* | 95.3 | | | |

Ohio State football.

On Thursdays, "Bucksline" will return yet again at Buffalo Wild Wings on Bethel Road in Columbus, featuring McCoy with analysts Stanley Jackson, Bill Conley, Jeff Logan and occasionally Maetzold and Reiser. "Bucksline" is a two-hour long show, from 6-8 p.m.

The gameday coverage is extensive, though a little confusing if you do not know what to look for. The "Best Buckeye Coverage" pregame show starts three hours before every game, but its location on the dial depends on the time of the game.

For noon games, the pregame show, broadcast live from O Zone on Lane Avenue, can be found on 105.7 The Brew, not WTVN 610. For later games, the pregame coverage will be found on the usual 610 AM station.

Postgame coverage starts right after the games end each week on 610, featuring the Ryan Day press conference, postgame questions from Lori Schmidt, and then two to three hours of analysis from the "Bucksline" crew.

Lastly, 610 is releasing a new podcast starting Tuesday, Aug. 27, featuring McCoy and Jackson. The podcast will be released every Tuesday during the season, though it will not air on the radio station.

Columbus TV Coverage

For those in Columbus, there are again plenty of options for Buckeye coverage on essentially every local channel.

WBNS has brought back "Wall to Wall Sports" with Dom Tiberi, Dave Holmes and numerous guests on Saturday and Sunday nights during the season.

WBNS will also be airing its usual "Buckeye Blitz" segments every Thursday and Friday.

The "Football Fever" show is back as well on ABC 6 or Fox 28, depending on where Ohio State's games fall and the timing of the games. You can find that information on ABC 6 during the week leading up to the game or abc6onyour-side.com.

As it did last year, "Football Fever" will air before and after games, featuring analysis from Clay Hall and former Buckeyes Obie Stillwell and Ben Buchanan.

The show is set to feature interviews with players and coaches. The in-studio hosts are Matt Finkes, Jay Richardson and Rodney Dunigan.

Even In Recruiting Loss, OSU Finds New Life

Ohio State seemed to be in prime position to put a bow on its excellent 2020 recruiting class.

With 22 commits on board, the Buckeyes were really in need of only three more pledges to complete the class, and while that final spot was still up for grabs, two more spots were all but filled by running backs Bijan Robinson and Jaylan Knighton. The duo were set to announce their commitments shortly after the recruiting dead period ended on July 24, with Knighton on July 30 and Robinson on Aug. 3.

ON RECRUITING Patrick Mayhorn

Both had been considered strong Buckeye leans for months and were essentially written into the class in ink by experts, fellow recruits and even Ohio State's staff. Then, the Sunday before the big week, news broke that Knighton, a four-star all-purpose back from Deerfield Beach, Fla., had made a surprise visit to Florida State the night prior. FSU was once considered the leader for Knighton but had fallen to the wayside after Knighton visited Ohio State back in June.

The same day, reports flooded in that Robinson, one of the nation's top backs, had changed his mind. After telling every insider and coach that he would be attending Ohio State, he made it clear to those same coaches and insiders that Ohio State would in fact not be the choice, citing both distance from his home in Arizona and a feeling that his faith was leading him elsewhere.

In what was supposed to be one of Ohio State's biggest recruiting weeks of the year, and a week that would all but seal Ryan Day's first class, Knighton announced his commitment to Florida State on July 30. Three days later, Robinson picked Texas, snubbing Ohio State and USC.

After the initial shock of losing two top-

100 running backs in a matter of days wore off, it was time for Ohio State to get back to work and find replacements at running back, because the Buckeyes still want and perhaps even need two running backs in the 2020 class. With Brian Snead no longer on the team and J.K. Dobbins likely to leave for the NFL, Ohio State's running back room is starting to look a bit depleted.

Get to work they did, immediately reaching out to Texas four-star Emmitt "E.J." Smith and Dublin (Ohio) Coffman product Michael Drennen II. Both players expressed plenty of interest but have plans to go through the full recruiting process, which means that neither is likely to commit right away. Ohio State is still very interested in both, but more time spent on the recruiting process for those two means more time for Ohio State to scout the country for uncommitted backs.

Enter Lancaster, Texas, four-star Kevontre Bradford, the newest target on Ohio State's board. Bradford has the look of an under-the-radar gem and the offer sheet to match, though it is a bit hard to call the No. 235 player in the country – per 247Sports – “under the radar.” Bradford claims 25 offers from teams all over the country, though none is more impressive than Wisconsin, frequently lauded for its ability to identify running back talent. Generally, if Wisconsin likes a running back, he will be a pretty good back, and Wisconsin really likes Bradford. Ohio State seems to feel the same way.

Much to the delight of the Buckeyes, Bradford has reciprocated that interest and has said all of the right things to indicate serious consideration of the Buckeyes. He has expressed little to no concerns about leaving the Lone Star state, often the first concern with recruits from Texas. In fact, he seems to have no interest in staying close to home, with only one in-state school (Baylor) in his group of serious contenders.

On top of that, Bradford still has four official visit spots to use up this fall. He took a visit to Wisconsin, his presumed leader, back in June but made no plans for a commitment shortly after. He seems

content, just like Drennen and Smith, to take his time. For Drennen and Smith, that may be bad news for Ohio State, because the Buckeyes have been in contact with those two for months, and the more schools they see, the lower Ohio State's chances are of landing them. For Bradford, it is the exact opposite. Ohio State needs his recruitment to go long, because the Buckeye staff still has to get to know him.

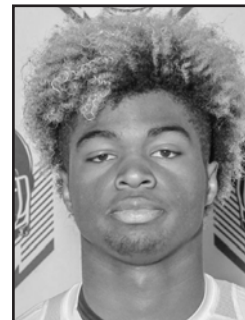
After all, Ohio State has had an offer out to him only since Aug. 1, and the extension of that offer was really the first contact that the two parties had. Ohio State is interested, Bradford is interested, but there is still plenty of relationship left to be built before the deal is done and Bradford is signed, sealed and delivered to Ohio State. That serves, in this case, as a good thing, because Bradford is still a player Ohio State would like to see preform in his senior season.

The four-star back has loads of talent, but there are questions about his game. He seems to lack physicality in a way that would be a lot more concerning if not for his elite track speed, reminiscent of Ezekiel Elliott's breakaway pace that Ohio State fans delighted in a few years ago. Bradford also has a serious lack of receiving production, and while he's a willing blocker, he would look different from the traditional Ohio State workhorse back. He is not going to run through defenders, but to this point, he has not needed to. He can just run past them.

Ohio State's staff would still like to see him do that for one more year. The tape on him is very encouraging, as is his background as a track star, his lightning-quick footwork and the natural talent that has garnered interest from Power 5 programs all over the map. However, those questions about his willingness to hit or catch out of the backfield remain. Ohio State can put up with a speedy back who does not love to hit but cannot with a back who goes out of his way to avoid contact. This upcoming season will answer those questions.

If Bradford passes the test, as expected, Ohio State will likely turn on the full-court press. He will almost certainly make an official visit to Columbus this fall, and as long as he looks like the athlete that Ohio State thinks he is this upcoming season, he looks to be running back target 1A, with Smith right next to him as 1B, and Drennen in more of a hybrid role as the second back in the class.

Would a class with Bradford and Drennen fill the hole left by Robinson and Knighton? Probably not. Those are two topflight talents, and while Bradford and Drennen have tremendous talent and sky-high ceilings, it is very hard to replace a five-star talent such as Robinson or even a high four-star like Knighton. However, with quality coaching, Bradford, Drennen or Smith could develop into NFL-caliber backs. They may not have the hype, but all three have the ability to continue the legacy of elite running backs donning the scarlet and gray.



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July Full Of Recruiting Fireworks For Ohio State

The month of July was significant for Ohio State on the recruiting trail, as the staff landed commitments from seven of the nation's top prospects to bring the total number of pledges from the 2020 recruiting class to 22 players.

The Buckeyes climbed all the way to No. 2 in the 247Sports composite team rankings but now sit fourth in the standings behind Clemson, Alabama and LSU. That's still tops in the Big Ten with a considerable lead over second-place Michigan (No. 10 overall).

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Andrew Lind

A lot has happened since Buckeye Sports Bulletin last went to press. The following is a full breakdown of Ohio State's recruiting efforts.

Cincinnati TE Commits To OSU

Cincinnati Elder three-star tight end Joe Royer got the fireworks started when he committed to Ohio State the evening of July 2.

The 6-5, 225-pound Royer was considered the 14th-best tight end and No. 451 prospect overall in the class of 2020, hauling in 31 catches for 612 yards and five touchdowns for the Panthers last season. He picked Ohio State over finalists Arizona State, LSU, Michigan, Penn State and Wisconsin.

Royer landed an offer from the staff during a one-day camp in early June where he outperformed program legacy Luke Lachey – the son of former Buckeye offensive lineman Jim Lachey – and other tight ends in attendance. He impressed

offensive coordinator and tight ends coach Kevin Wilson with his size, speed and blocking ability, among other things.

Royer quickly listed Ohio State among his top schools and set up an official visit, which he took the weekend of June 21. The Buckeyes also hosted four-star tight ends Cam Large and Jalin Conyers that weekend, but it was then that Royer emerged as the staff's top target.

Maryland LB Picks Bucks Over Michigan, Notre Dame

Less than 24 hours later, Olney (Md.) Good Counsel three-star linebacker Mitchell Melton pledged his services to Ohio State.

The 6-3, 235-pound Melton was considered the 43rd-best outside linebacker and No. 659 prospect overall in the 2020 recruiting class but showed his overall athleticism at The Opening this spring, registering a 4.87-second 40-yard dash, 4.27-second 20-yard shuttle and 32-inch vertical jump. He chose the Buckeyes over offers from programs such as Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, Notre Dame, Pittsburgh, Texas A&M, Virginia Tech and Wisconsin, among others.

Melton received an offer from Ohio State's previous staff following an unofficial visit during the win against Michigan last fall, and a second unofficial visit in March allowed him to build a relationship with co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison and linebackers coach Al Washington.

After narrowing down his options, Melton set official visits with the Buckeyes, Fighting Irish and Wolverines on consecutive weekends in late June. A discussion with his parents – who are originally from Ohio and grew up rooting for Ohio State – ultimately led to his commitment.

Ohio State Raids Michigan For ATH

Ohio State continued its summer commitment wave on July 4 with a pair of commitments, the first coming that morning from Muskegon, Mich., three-star athlete Cameron Martinez.

OSU Football Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2020 who have issued verbal commitments to play football at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the 247Sports composite rankings.)

| Player | Pos. | Ht. | Wt. | Stars | High School |
|--------------------|------|------|-----|-------|-------------------------------------|
| Paris Johnson Jr. | OT | 6-8 | 295 | ★★★★★ | Cincinnati Princeton |
| Jack Miller | QB | 6-4 | 210 | ★★★★ | Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral |
| Luke Wypler | OC | 6-4 | 285 | ★★★★ | Montvale (N.J.) St. Joseph Regional |
| Jaxon Smith-Njigba | WR | 6-1 | 188 | ★★★★ | Rockwall, Texas |
| Gee Scott Jr. | WR | 6-3 | 207 | ★★★★ | Sammamish (Wa.) Eastside Catholic |
| Jakob James | OG | 6-5 | 275 | ★★★ | Cincinnati Elder |
| Trey Leroux | OT | 6-8 | 355 | ★★★ | Norwalk, Ohio |
| Lejond Cavazos | CB | 6-1 | 190 | ★★★★ | Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy |
| Julian Fleming | WR | 6-2 | 199 | ★★★★★ | Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia |
| Jake Seibert | K | 6-1 | 190 | ★★★ | Cincinnati La Salle |
| Grant Toutant | OT | 6-7 | 320 | ★★★ | Warren (Mich.) De La Salle |
| Ty Hamilton | DE | 6-3 | 250 | ★★★ | Pickerington (Ohio) Central |
| Clark Phillips | CB | 5-11 | 178 | ★★★★ | La Habra, Calif. |
| Cody Simon | OLB | 6-1 | 218 | ★★★★ | Jersey City (N.J.) St. Peter's Prep |
| Darrion Henry | DT | 6-5 | 279 | ★★★★ | Cincinnati Princeton |
| Joe Royer | TE | 6-5 | 225 | ★★★ | Cincinnati Elder |
| Mitchell Melton | OLB | 6-3 | 235 | ★★★ | Olney (Md.) Good Counsel |
| Cameron Martinez | ATH | 6-0 | 183 | ★★★ | Muskegon, Mich. |
| Josh Fryar | OL | 6-6 | 305 | ★★★ | Beech Grove, Ind. |
| Mookie Cooper | WR | 5-9 | 193 | ★★★★ | St. Louis Trinity Catholic |
| Lathan Ransom | S | 6-1 | 193 | ★★★★ | Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic |
| Kourt Williams | ATH | 6-1 | 216 | ★★★★ | Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco |

Players in the class of 2021 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.

| Player | Pos. | Ht. | Wt. | Stars | High School |
|----------------|------|-----|-----|-------|-----------------------------|
| Jack Sawyer | DE | 6-6 | 220 | ★★★★★ | Pickerington (Ohio) North |
| Kyle McCord | QB | 6-3 | 204 | ★★★★ | Philadelphia St. Joseph's |
| Jayden Ballard | WR | 6-2 | 175 | ★★★★ | Massillon (Ohio) Washington |
| Ben Christman | OT | 6-6 | 299 | ★★★★ | Richfield (Ohio) Revere |

The 5-11, 183-pound Martinez was considered the 14th-best athlete and No. 368 prospect overall, as he rushed for 2,526 yards and 38 touchdowns and threw for 649 yards and 12 more scores to lead the Big Reds to the state championship game last fall. His position at the college level very much remains up in the air, though it will either be at slot receiver or hybrid linebacker/safety – otherwise known as the "Bullet" position.

Ohio State has been keeping tabs on Martinez for quite some time, dating back to early interest from former cornerbacks

coach Kerry Coombs and transitioning through Taver Johnson's tenure, and the Buckeyes finally offered him a scholarship in February. He took several unofficial visits this spring, which allowed him to bond with head coach Ryan Day, wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, co-defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff Hafley, assistant secondary coach Matt Barnes and director of player personnel Mark Pantoni.

His official visit to Ohio State the weekend of June 21 was the third and last official visit for Martinez, who also visited Northwestern in May and Minnesota in early June.

Buckeyes Land Top Indiana OL

Just a few hours after Martinez pledged his services to Ohio State, Beech Grove, Ind., three-star offensive lineman Josh Fryar did the same.

The 6-6, 305-pound Fryar was considered the 23rd-best offensive guard and No. 417 prospect overall in the class of 2020 but was recruited because of his ability to play multiple positions along the offensive line.

Fryar showed up on Ohio State's radar last fall, attending the win over Minnesota in October. The Buckeyes then extended a scholarship offer in December, but he was not discussed as an option until recently because the staff was focused on addressing other needs along the offensive line.

Fryar lined up several official visits for the spring with hopes of making a decision this summer, with schools such as Indiana, Oregon and Penn State each seemingly taking control of his recruitment with each visit. But then his official visit with Ohio State the weekend of June 21 ultimately separated the Buckeyes from the Hoosiers, Ducks and Nittany Lions.

Fryar is likely the final piece of the Buckeyes' offensive line haul, joining

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A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

Cincinnati Princeton five-star tackle Paris Johnson Jr.; Montvale (N.J.) St. Joseph Regional four-star Luke Wypler, the nation's top-rated center; Warren (Mich.) De La Salle four-star tackle Grant Toutant; Cincinnati Elder three-star tackle Jakob James; and Norwalk, Ohio, three-star tackle Trey Leroux already in the fold.

Ohio State Adds Another St. Louis WR

Ohio State added yet another one of the nation's top-rated wide receivers on July 7 when St. Louis Trinity Catholic four-star Mookie Cooper announced his commitment to the Buckeyes.

The 5-9, 193-pound Cooper was considered the 14th-best wide receiver and No. 75 prospect overall in the class of 2020. He racked up 1,153 all-purpose yards and scored 18 touchdowns to lead the Titans to the state championship last season – where they defeated incoming freshman wide receiver Jameson Williams and Cardinal Ritter Prep, 45-19. He picked Ohio State over finalists Illinois, Miami (Fla.), Texas and USC.

The Buckeyes extended an offer to Cooper back in October 2017 but didn't become a player for his services until this spring when he reopened his recruitment following a three-week commitment to the Longhorns. The Illini were the perceived favorite to land Cooper's pledge in the weeks thereafter thanks to his relationship with tight ends coach Cory Patterson (his former head coach at Trinity Catholic), but his first and only trip to Columbus in mid-May changed that.

With his decision, Cooper joins three other top-100 wide receivers in Ohio State's recruiting class: Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia five-star Julian Fleming (No. 3 overall); Rockwall, Texas, four-star Jaxon Smith-Njigba (No. 62); and Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic four-star Gee Scott Jr. (No. 63).

Cooper also became the third wide receiver from St. Louis to commit to the Buckeyes in as many years, including Christian Brothers College four-star Kamryn Babb in 2018 and Williams, a Cardinal Ritter Prep four-star in 2019.

Arizona S Chooses Buckeyes On Birthday

Ohio State landed a commitment from one of the nation's top-rated defensive backs on July 16 when Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic four-star safety Lathan Ransom pledged his services to the Buckeyes on his 17th birthday.

The 6-1, 193-pound Ransom was considered the fourth-best safety and No. 77 prospect overall in the class of 2020. He recorded 82 total tackles, eight pass breakups and six interceptions to lead the Lancers to the state championship game last fall. He picked Ohio State over LSU, Notre Dame, Oklahoma and Texas.

Hafley extended a scholarship offer to Ransom in January, and the prospect made his first trip to Columbus for an unofficial visit just a few weeks later. The Buckeyes clearly made an impression that weekend, too, as he subsequently listed the program among his top five schools.

Both the Fighting Irish and Longhorns were considered the favorites in Ransom's recruitment at various points in time, as the former shares a number of similarities with his Catholic high school and the latter ultimately landed his teammate, five-star running back Bijan Robinson. That all

30 Years Ago – 1989

Several Buckeye football recruits showcased their talents for the final time as high school players in the 44th annual Ohio North-South All-Star Game, played in Massillon.

Wide receiver Roger Harper of Columbus Independence grabbed two touchdown passes to help lead the South to a 23-0 victory.

Despite the fact his team lost, Elyria West linebacker Steve Tovar was named the North's most valuable player in the game.

Starting the game for the victorious South squad were OSU recruits Dante Lee of Dayton Meadowdale at running back, Jack Thrush of Cincinnati Moeller at offensive guard, Tim Williams of Waynesville at placekicker and Harper. Also playing for the South was Chillicothe defensive tackle Chuck Jones, an OSU recruit who failed to graduate from high school on time.

Starting for the North team were running back Raymont Harris of Lorain Admiral King, offensive guard Alan Kline of Tiffin Columbian, defensive tackle Dave Monnot of Canton Central Catholic and Tovar.

25 Years Ago – 1994

Of the top defensive backs in Ohio, Charles Woodson (6-2, 185, 4.5) of Fremont Ross was considered the best. In fact, he was the early preseason favorite for the best high school prospect in the state regardless of position.

He hoped to play defensive back in college and had accounted for 49 tackles, three interceptions and nine passes broken up the previous season. But scouts also looked at him as a bona fide tailback prospect, especially after he rushed for more than 1,600 yards and 27 touchdowns in just nine games as a junior. He won All-Ohio honors in football and all-district honors in basketball and had already qualified to play as a college freshman.

Unfortunately for Ohio State, Woodson did not list the Buckeyes among his early-season favorites. Woodson's list included Michigan as the favorite with Tennessee, Alabama, Notre Dame and Georgia.

20 Years Ago – 1999

Free safety Willie Allen (6-2, 175, 4.33) of Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne was not among Ohio's top-rated prospects, but the OSU coaches had a good book on him, having seen him in camp the previous three years.

"They offered me after the camp," Allen said. "In May when they called me about coming to the camp, they mentioned they might want to offer me there. They didn't offer me until later. I called last week to see where I stood, whether they were offering me or not, and they did."

OSU assistant coach Shawn Simms confirmed that the Buckeyes were interested.

"He offered me and I said I had to talk it over with my parents," Allen said. "The next day, I called them and committed."

15 Years Ago – 2004

Ted Ginn Jr. made sure that his last football as a high schooler was a memorable one.

He was the Under Armour All-America Game's leading receiver, gathering in five passes for 142 yards including an 82-yard touchdown from quarterback Grant Gregory, who was headed to Indiana to play college ball. On the play, Ginn ran a fade pattern in the middle of the field, used his speed to get spacing on defender Steffan Brinson (Pittsburgh) and then raced the distance untouched once Gregory delivered the ball.

Ginn also threw for a score in the fourth quarter. Quarterback Brian Hoyer (Michigan State) flipped the ball out to Ginn in the flat, who then pitched a strike to Dustin Woods (Miami, Ohio) for a 36-yard touchdown. The TD came with 4:57 remaining in the fourth quarter.

"We had practiced it earlier in the week," Ginn said. "We knew that was the play, and we knew it was going to work. We were just waiting for the right time to throw it in. I guess that was the right time."

10 Years Ago – 2009

In an interview with the Post and Courier in Charleston, S.C., former OSU recruit and current Clemson quarterback Tajh Boyd spoke about why he selected the Tigers over the Buckeyes.

"Terrelle Pryor, he is Ohio State," Boyd told the newspaper. "(Clemson) hasn't really established anybody. I've got an opportunity to come in with a new coach (Dabo Swinney), who is going to play the best player."

After undergoing surgery to repair a torn ACL, Boyd said he expected to be fully healthy. He would likely receive a red-shirt for the upcoming season, however.

Five Years Ago – 2014

Jerome Baker, committed to Florida out of Cleveland Benedictine on the same day that LeBron James announced his return to Cleveland. The 6-1, 205-pound linebacker selected the Gators over Ohio State and Tennessee.

"They were a little different, a little farther away from home," Baker said. "It's just a feel and in the SEC, so I'm definitely going to be playing with the best."

One Year Ago – 2018

In the midst of the Ohio State independent board's two-week investigation into how head coach Urban Meyer had handled allegations of past domestic violence by former wide receivers coach Zach Smith, Austin (Texas) Lake Travis five-star wide-out Garrett Wilson shared his thoughts on the matter and said 2018 would be rousing success for the Buckeyes.

"Talking to my mom (on Aug. 12), I'm like, 'I don't know why stuff like this has got to happen,'" Wilson told CBS Austin. "She's like, 'Welcome to life.' So, some things go wrong, not everything's going to go right."

"At the end of the day, I feel like those kids are going to come back stronger after this, Coach Meyer's going to come back stronger and they're going to win a (national championship) this year."

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Continued On Page 58

Buckeyes Miss Out On Three Top-Ranked RBs

Continued From Page 57

changed when Ransom took an official visit to Ohio State in mid-June, however, and a flood of 247Sports Crystal Ball predictions were placed in favor of the Buckeyes.

Ohio State Goes Back To California For LB/S

Already an important date on the calendar with college football's recruiting dead period coming to an end, July 24 became even more significant for Ohio State when Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star Kourt Williams announced his commitment to the Buckeyes.

The 6-1, 216-pound Williams was considered the 12th-best outside linebacker and No. 161 prospect overall in the class of 2020, recording 74 tackles, two sacks and two pass breakups to lead the Braves to the state semifinals last season, but Hafley believes he's a perfect fit for the aforementioned "Bullet" position.

Williams picked Ohio State over finalists Penn State, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas A&M.

The Buckeyes extended an offer to Williams – who attends the high school that produced current offensive guard Wyatt Davis and one-time safety commit Jaiden Woodbey – during his unofficial visit in March. His relationship with Hafley blossomed from there and ultimately allowed Ohio State to stay in the picture while Williams took official visits to other schools throughout the spring.

Williams took only four of his five allotted official visits, the last to Columbus the week-end of June 21-23. That trip alongside his parents solidified the Buckeyes' spot at the forefront of his recruitment.

Buckeyes Fail To Land Top-Ranked RBs

Ohio State hosted three of the nation's top-rated running backs for official visits during the

month of June, including Clovis (Calif.) Buchanan five-star Kendall Milton, Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic five-star Bijan Robinson and Deerfield Beach, Fla., four-star Jaylan Knighton. And though the Buckeyes felt good about their chances coming out of each visit, all three ended up committing elsewhere in late July or early August.

Ohio State was the first of four official visits for the 6-2, 229-pound Milton, who quickly trended toward Georgia following his trip to Athens a few weeks later. He committed to the Bulldogs on July 29.

The Buckeyes shifted their focus to Knighton and Robinson as a result and were the perceived favorites to land a commitment from both, but things changed drastically when the dead period came to an end. Knighton took an unexpected unofficial visit to Florida State for the Seminoles' Saturday Night Live recruiting event and committed just a few days later on July 30.

Robinson also seemed like a lock for Ohio

State until the staff was alerted roughly one week before his announcement date that the Buckeyes would not be his choice. It appears distance played a significant role in his recruitment, which ended on Aug. 2 with a commitment to Texas.

Ohio State will still look to add two running backs in the current recruiting cycle, which leaves Dallas Jesuit four-star E.J. Smith — the son of NFL Hall of Famer Emmitt Smith — Dublin (Ohio) Coffman four-star Michael Drennen and Lancaster, Texas, four-star Kevontre Bradford among the staff's top remaining targets.

Top CB Target Transfers To IMG

On July 10, LSU five-star cornerback commit Elias Ricks announced that he will be transferring to Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy where he'll play his senior year alongside his friend and Ohio State four-star cornerback pledge Lejond Cavazos.

The 6-2, 192-pound Ricks – who is considered the second-best cornerback and No. 15 prospect overall in the 2020 recruiting class – was previously at Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei but was notified by the school he could not graduate early and decided to transfer.

Cavazos and Ricks have not been shy about stating their desire to play together in college, though their current commitments would obviously prevent that from happening. The latter is set to take an official visit to Ohio State for the Penn State game on Nov. 22, which will give the Buckeyes an opportunity to flip his pledge.

Ricks was close to committing to Ohio State until former head coach Urban Meyer announced his retirement in early December. He picked LSU just a few weeks later, so it will be up to Day to rekindle those feelings during his official visit.

Tennessee DE Includes Ohio State Among Top 5

Ohio State continues to search for an additional defensive lineman to fill out its 2020 recruiting class, and Knoxville (Tenn.) Catholic four-star Tyler Baron is at the top of the list. It appears the feeling is mutual, too, as the 6-5, 252-pound Baron listed the Buckeyes in his top five on Aug. 9 alongside Kentucky, Oklahoma, Oregon and Tennessee.

The home-state Volunteers are the heavy favorite in Baron's recruitment, but he speaks with Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson, running backs coach/area recruiter Tony Alford and Day several times each week.

Baron visited Columbus for the first and only time for the spring game back in April but is planning to return to campus for an official visit for the game against Michigan State on Oct. 5. He's expected to make a college decision in the weeks thereafter.

Buckeyes Hand Out Several New Offers

The month of July was relatively slow in terms of offers, with the dead period preventing recruits from visiting campus and coaches from contacting them. But once contact was allowed to resume on July 24, the Ohio State staff was quick to reach out to some of the nation's top prospects.

The Buckeyes have extended offers in the last few weeks to the above-mentioned Bradford; 2021 Katy, Texas, four-star cornerback Hunter Washington (5-11, 178); 2021 Powder Springs (Ga.) McEachern four-star athlete Chief Borders; and 2022 Denison, Texas, four-star running back Jadarian Price.

For the latest in Ohio State football recruiting news, be sure to check out BuckeyeSports.com, free to all subscribers, daily.



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ASK AN ANALYST

With Buckeye Grove's Marc Givler

Ohio State had a stellar month of July on the recruiting trail, landing commitments from seven prospects: Cincinnati Elder three-star tight end Joe Royer on July 2; Olney (Md.) Good Counsel three-star linebacker Mitchell Melton on July 3; Muskegon, Mich., three-star athlete Cameron Martinez and Beech Grove, Ind., three-star offensive guard Josh Fryar on July 4; St. Louis Trinity Catholic four-star wide receiver Mookie Cooper on July 8; Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic four-star safety Lathan Ransom on July 16; and Bellflower, Calif., four-star linebacker Kourt Williams on July 24.

When it comes to players like Cooper, Ransom and Williams, specifically, how did their spring/early summer official visits allow Ohio State to wrap up their respective recruitments?

"Getting the early unofficial visit is so important. If you look historically at national type recruits that Ohio State has been able to land, the overwhelming majority of those players first took an early unofficial visit before their official visits.

"The unofficial sets the table. It gives guys an in-depth look at what Ohio State is all about in terms of the environment, the athletics and the academics. In all three of these situations, Ohio State was able to get them on campus for an unofficial visit during the winter/spring to help pique the interest and get them back on campus later on.

"With Williams and Ransom specifically, the official visits each presented a different challenge.

"Ohio State emerged from Williams' March unofficial visit as the team to beat, so it was simply a matter of getting a few more questions answered about the day-to-day life within the program and getting him around other guys on the team and just making sure on his end that this was the type of place and culture he wanted to be a part of.

"With Ransom, the Buckeyes were playing from behind a little bit after a pretty short unofficial visit from

him back in March. I think a big thing with Ransom was that he was in on that huge June 21 weekend where the Buckeyes hosted more than a dozen visitors. Many of them ended up committing to Ohio State. It was a momentum thing where they were able to not only impress him individually, but he saw the wave of other guys that were ready to make the jump as well and they just sort of carried that momentum into July.

"Cooper was again a product of a great unofficial visit in May. The Buckeyes really prioritized him during the spring evaluation period, quickly built a relationship with him and then had that great May unofficial visit which carried them to his July commitment."

Ohio State was widely expected to land commitments from both Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic five-star running back Bijan Robinson and Deerfield Beach, Fla., four-star all-purpose back Jaylan Knighton, but that changed the weekend of July 27-28.

Knighton committed to Florida State just days after he took an unofficial visit for the Seminoles' summer recruiting spectacular, and details are seemingly hard to come by when it comes to Robinson, who - despite being Ransom's high school teammate - pledged his services to Texas on Aug. 2.

What happened in their respective recruitments that led them elsewhere, and where do the Buckeyes go from here at the running back position?

"Ohio State was definitely caught off guard by both of these developments - particularly the Robinson development. As July wore on, cold feet set in as he contemplated going across the country and it was eventually relayed to the Ohio State staff that this was going to be something they might not be able to overcome. Knighton's situation was a bit different where he made the late July visit to Florida State and the Seminoles were able to overtake Ohio State on that visit and land his commitment.

"The board is pretty much getting a total reset at this

point, and I think you'll see more than a dozen names talked about over the next few months. I don't see this as a quick fix and think Ohio State will take a broad and methodical approach this time around, evaluate some senior film and start piecing the board back together."

Ohio State's 2020 recruiting class sits at 22 players as of Aug. 16. And though it's been said Cincinnati La Salle three-star kicker Jake Seibert will grayshirt and not count toward the scholarship numbers his first year on campus, there's no denying numbers are getting tight with four months until the early signing period in December.

Let's just assume the Buckeyes are still looking to add a pair of running backs this cycle; have a spot or two reserved for potential flips from LSU five-star cornerback commit Elias Ricks and/or Oklahoma four-star cornerback pledge Ryan Watts; are looking to add another defensive lineman; and may consider pursuing a second quarterback this cycle. That pushes the class into the range of 27 or so signees.

Do you think Ohio State would sign that many players, or do you think the staff would be forced to have some difficult conversations with lower-ranked commitments in order to bring more talented prospects on board? And, along those same lines, do you think the Buckeyes should fear any potential decommitments in the coming months (particularly from some of the aforementioned West Coast kids)?

"I do think this class ends up at about 27 pledges. Decommitments are just a reality now in college football recruiting, but there isn't a specific kid right now that I feel is wavering on his pledge. For the most part this group looks really solid to Ohio State, though the odds probably tell you that - with several months to go - it wouldn't be out of the ordinary for one or two guys to have a change of heart. But again, there isn't really a guy out there right now that has expressed this sentiment, so everything looks pretty solid as we sit here today."

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Wisconsin Adds Two-Game Series With Alabama

Quite a few people in Big Ten country have been clamoring for more SEC vs. Big Ten matchups. With all the chatter for the better part of the last decade about SEC dominance, there have been few chances for Big Ten teams to show off what they can do against the SEC in anything outside of bowl games.

BIG TEN NOTES Patrick Mayhorn

While one move doesn't show a full change of the times, fans looking for more SEC and Big Ten clashes got what they wanted when Wisconsin and Alabama announced that they had scheduled a home-and-home series, set to kick off in Madison in 2024 with a return matchup in Tuscaloosa in 2025.

Landing Alabama is a big deal for any Big Ten team. Wisconsin has beefed up its schedule in recent years, playing games against LSU, BYU, Arizona State and, in 2015, the Crimson Tide, for a one-off game. Since Nick Saban was hired back in 2007, the Crimson Tide have played plenty of marquee nonconference games, but they rarely traveled too far north in matchups against Florida State, Clemson, Virginia Tech, Duke, Michigan, Penn State, West Virginia, Wisconsin, USC and, most recently, Louisville. Of all those matchups, the only game played in what can be considered to be "the North" was a 2011 matchup with Penn State that the Tide won 27-11.

Former Michigan State Dean Sentenced To Year In Prison

The fallout from the Larry Nassar scandal at Michigan State has been large-scale.

The latest news to come in the aftermath of Michigan State's lengthy investigation into its own program came on Aug. 7, when it was reported that a judge had sentenced former Michigan State University Dean William Strampel to spend a year in jail for his role in the Larry Nassar sexual assault scandal.

Strampel, who had been accused of sexual misconduct as well back in 2018 by four Michigan State students, was judged by the jury to have shown complete indifference to Nassar's crimes and about whether he was following university protocol.

Michigan In Hot Water After Transfer Comments

It's been a relatively quiet summer for Jim Harbaugh, at least when compared to his history of treehouse sleepovers, shirtless satellite camps and trips overseas. The Michigan head coach has, for the most part, avoided headlines since January, as he's taken a seemingly calculated approach to avoiding the controversy that he tends to generate. He took shots at Urban Meyer on a podcast back in July, saying that Meyer is a great coach but a coach followed always by controversy, but outside of that, Harbaugh made it through most of the summer basically unscathed.

Then, at Big Ten Media Days, Harbaugh couldn't help himself. When asked about former Wolverine James Hudson, who had since transferred to Cincinnati, citing mental health struggles that weren't being addressed in Ann Arbor, Harbaugh expressed little to no concern about the former player and went off on a lengthy tangent about the transfer portal.

After a few quiet days, Cincinnati head coach Luke Fickell responded to Harbaugh's comments, speaking mostly about how Michigan could have signed a waiver that would have allowed Hudson to play right

away but chose not to. This, again, struck Harbaugh the wrong way, and he responded at a press conference earlier this month.

"I read Luke Fickell's comments. Unless I'm reading them wrong or mistaken, I believe he's under the impression that these waivers are decided, coach to coach, in some kind of deal fashion. That is not the understanding that I'm under. I'm under the understanding that the NCAA decides these waivers. Unless (Fickell) has something that he can bring forth and share and enlighten us and the entire football world, I would really like to know what that is because he called me in March and he wanted to know about the position switch that James was switched from defensive line to offensive line."

Fickell responded by saying his conversation with Harbaugh was "kind of cold."

"It was short. It wasn't a long conversation. It wasn't hard to figure out what their stance was," Fickell said.

Walk-On Earns Scholarship After Throwing Out First Pitch

It's hard to imagine a much bigger day for Minnesota receiver Clay Geary than Aug. 7. He not only got the opportunity, along with a few teammates, to throw out the first pitch at a Minnesota Twins game, but then he was surprised just moments later with an official scholarship, presented to him by Twins pitcher Kyle Gibson. A few of his teammates – including safety Antoine Winfield Jr., linebacker Carter Coughlin and linebacker Thomas Barber – swarmed the redshirt junior.

Regarding the first pitch and the scholarship offer, Minnesota head coach P.J. Fleck told the (Minneapolis) Star Tribune, "It's something that you can take that you create a moment and memory that lasts a lifetime."

That feeling resonated with Geary,

who called it the craziest thing that ever happened to him.

"All my family watching the game, my grandpa's watching the game. I told them I was throwing the first pitch," Geary said. "And just to have them be there watching me get a scholarship, I wouldn't want it any other way. I mean, that was perfect."

Maryland Loses Wideout For Season

Maryland has had worse injury luck in the past few years than just about any program in the Big Ten, especially when it comes to ACL injuries. The Terrapins have lost quarterback after quarterback to ACL injuries, dating back to 2012. That season, C.J. Brown, Perry Hills and Caleb Rowe all tore ACLs during the season. In 2015, the Terrapins had to use four different quarterbacks, thanks to both injuries and poor play.

Then in 2017, Maryland lost another two quarterbacks, Tyrell Pigrome and Kasim Hill, to – you guessed it – ACL tears. Hill tore his ACL again this past season. Now, it seems as though the ACL tear bug is spreading. This spring, the Terrapins lost safety Antwaine Richardson, and now, in fall practice, projected starting receiver Jeshawn Jones has suffered the same fate.

Jones picked up 288 yards on 28 receptions last year as a freshman, as well as five touchdowns and 173 yards on 18 carries. He had looked to be one of the more exciting young players on Mike Locksley's roster.

Gattis, Locksley Spar Over Alabama Responsibilities

You would think that after being named the head coach at Maryland, or the offensive coordinator at Michigan, you would be pretty content to look at your past and realize that whatever is in it belongs in the past, because you've found yourself at a pretty great present.

You would think that, but you would apparently be wrong, because Michigan offensive coordinator Josh Gattis and Maryland head coach Locksley have spent several weeks now arguing about the past.

Specifically, they've argued about their shared past. Gattis was the wide receivers coach for Alabama last season, while Locksley was the offensive coordinator, and that is apparently where all the bickering is coming from.

This started back at Big Ten Media Days, when, despite being asked specifically about Gattis, Locksley chose to ignore the question and say rather that he had a great offensive staff, instead of specifically speaking about Gattis. Locksley also implied that he called all the plays, a claim that was never really disputed by anyone.

Gattis took issue with that and issued a statement, shooting back at the perceived slight from his former coworker. Gattis stated that while he didn't call the plays at Alabama, he did have plenty of input on both the calls and the game plan, and he said the media should ask Locksley where the plays he was calling came from, implying that Gattis was usually the one to actually install the plays.

Continuing the catfight, Locksley answered during a media availability, saying that he'd "been a first-time play-caller before. Back in 2005 (at Illinois) was the first time I had a chance to call plays, so I know the anxiety that comes along with it. Josh knows the truth, that's really important to understand. I also know there's a difference between suggestions and decisions."

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Ohio State Alumni Take Home \$2 Million Prize

The Basketball Tournament, a \$2 million winner take-all summer diversion, is better known as TBT. For a group of former Ohio State players, the acronym also means Turn Back Time.

Carmen's Crew, consisting mainly of former Buckeyes who were coached by, but never won a national championship for, Thad Matta, won the TBT with a 66-60 victory over the Marquette alumnus-heavy Golden Eagles in Chicago on Aug. 6 in Chicago.

COURT REPORT Craig Merz

William Buford (2008-12) scored the decisive basket and was named the game's Most Valuable Player while David Lighty (2006-11) led the team with 17 points.

Other notable former Buckeyes included Aaron Craft (2010-14), Jon Diebler (2007-11), Dallas Lauderdale (2007-11), Evan Ravenel (2011-13) and LaQuinton Ross (2011-14). Jared Sullinger (2010-12) was the head coach assisted by Evan Turner (2007-10).

Sullinger said familiarity and kinship were as important as talent in winning the tournament.

"It means everything," Sullinger told BSB. "You don't get this type of bond anywhere. These guys, we fought hard in college. We've got a variety of years, and on top of that, we've got years of playing in open gym - that's huge.

"These guys are like family to me."

The team also got a big boost from non-OSU players such as 39-year-old Jeff Gibbs, who won a Division III national title for Otterbein University in 2002 and was an All-American in basketball and football at the suburban Columbus school in Westerville.

"We don't have egos," Sullinger said. "Everybody understands what everybody can do. Nobody steps outside their line. You don't see Jon Diebler coming down, coming off a pick and roll, breaking somebody down to a shot. He knows his role. Will knows his role. Leon Rodgers (formerly of Illinois) knows his role. Rav knows his role."

For the OSU basketball following that has yearned for a second NCAA championship banner to join the one from 1960 in the Value City Arena rafters, it was a feel-good moment.

The Buckeyes twice reached the Final Four during Matta's tenure from 2004-17 but never got over the hump. In 2007, a team that included freshmen Mike Conley Jr. and Greg Oden lost the championship game to Florida, 84-75. The Buckeyes won the NIT the next season.

In 2012, a year after being knocked off as the No. 1 seed in the East by Kentucky in the regional championship, OSU lost to Kansas 64-62 in the national semifinal after leading by nine at the half.

Matta was present for many of the games played by Carmen's Crew, which played as Scarlet and Gray their first two seasons. The players always made sure to acknowledge his influence.

Several players got a small measure of payback - if that's possible - for losing to Dayton 60-59 in the first round of the 2014 NCAA Tournament. It's a game that still haunts Buckeye fans, and losing to an

in-state rival added to the angst.

Craft, who missed a game-winning shot at the buzzer in that game, iced an 85-71 win over the Dayton Red Scare, made up of former Flyers, on July 21 at Capital University in suburban Columbus.

Carmen's Crew advanced to the title game by upsetting Overseas Elite 71-66 on Aug. 4. Overseas had won the first four TBT titles and was 29-0 all time.

"We just knew that in order to try to be a champion, you've got to take out a champion," Sullinger told the Chicago Sun-Times.

The Carmen's Crew players received their share of the \$2 million prize ranging from \$150,000 to \$200,000. Sullinger pocketed \$50,000.

On The Buckeye Recruiting Trail

Current OSU coach Chris Holtmann got one Johnson and lost another in early August when it came to big-time commitments. In each case the home (state) advantage was the difference.

On Aug. 6, four-star shooting guard Keon Johnson from The Webb School in Bell Buckle, Tenn., chose the Volunteers over the Buckeyes. Johnson (6-5, 180) is the fifth-best shooting guard and No. 25 prospect in the class of 2020 in the 247Sports composite.

The news was better for OSU on Aug. 13 when 2021 four-star point guard Meechie Johnson Jr., from Cleveland Garfield Heights committed while on an unofficial visit to campus. Johnson (5-11, 160) is ranked the No. 71 prospect, third in the state and fifth at his position.

Despite a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee sustained before a play-off game on March 7, his offers included Georgetown and Louisville.

Meechie Johnson's former Garfield Heights teammate Alonzo Gaffney is starting his freshman season at Ohio State. They played together when Gaffney was a junior before he transferred to Brewster Academy in New Hampshire for his senior season.

Johnson is the second member of Holtmann's 2021 class, joining Convoy (Ohio) Crestview forward Kalen Etzler, a 247Sports four-star recruit who committed in May.

The Buckeyes should have two more openings for the 2021 class. They have no commitments for 2020 with only one spot available as of now.

Losing out on Keon Johnson was not unexpected, and the fact that three days prior to his announcement he listed OSU as a finalist doesn't close the door on the Buckeyes in this crazy, new world of more liberal views on transfers by the NCAA.

In other recruiting news:

- Holtmann and his staff will key on filling the 2020 spot, possibly with a big man in anticipation that junior Kaleb Wesson may leave for the NBA following the season.

Four-star center Ryan Kalkbrenner (6-11, 210) from St. Louis Trinity Catholic made an unofficial visit at the end of July. He's ranked 78th nationally, 12th at his position.

- A pair of four-star power forwards have the Buckeyes among their top five choices. Henry Coleman (6-6, 210) from Richmond (Va.) Trinity Episcopal School also has Duke, Michigan, North Carolina and Virginia Tech on his final list. Lance Ware (6-9, 215) from Camden, N.J., lists the other finalists as Kentucky, the University of Miami, Michigan and Providence. Ware will make an official visit to Columbus the weekend of Aug. 30.

OSU Men's Basketball Verbal Commits

Players in the class of 2021 who have issued verbal commitments to play football at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the 247Sports composite rankings.)

| Player | Pos. | Ht. | Wt. | Stars | High School |
|-----------------|------|------|-----|-------|----------------------------|
| Kalen Etzler | PF | 6-8 | 195 | ★★★★ | Convoy (Ohio) Crestview |
| Meechie Johnson | CG | 5-11 | 160 | ★★★★ | Cleveland Garfield Heights |

Buckeyes Return To Venerable Arena

When the 2019-20 non-conference schedule was released on Aug. 12, it wasn't that big a deal because word of the Buckeyes playing the likes of Cincinnati, Kentucky, North Carolina, Villanova and West Virginia had trickled out over the offseason months.

What really got the media and fans excited was not who, but where.

The Buckeyes return for a second straight season to venerable St. John Arena, the program's home before crossing Lane Avenue and the Olentangy River to spacious Value City Arena in 1998.

Ohio State will play Kent State on Nov. 25 as part of the three-game Ohio State Classic. The Buckeyes will also host Stetson (Nov. 18) and Purdue Fort Wayne (Nov. 22) at Value City Arena.

OSU returned St. John in throwback uniforms to defeat Cleveland State, 89-62, on Nov. 23, 2018, the night before the Ohio State-Michigan game.

Holtmann has discussed making that an annual event whenever the Wolverines visit Ohio Stadium, and he's also considering playing a big-name opponent there.

OSU hosts Cedarville in an exhibition on Oct. 30 then begins the season in VCA against Cincinnati on Nov. 6 in the Bearcats' first game

in Columbus since Dec. 10, 1921. OSU opened last season with a 64-56 win at Cincinnati.

Other highlights:

- OSU hosts Villanova on Nov. 13 in the Gavitt Games matchup of Big Ten and Big East schools.

- The Buckeyes go to Chapel Hill on Dec. 4 to face North Carolina in the Big Ten/ACC Challenge.

- Kentucky is the opponent in Las Vegas on Dec. 21 in the CBS Sports Classic.

- OSU and West Virginia meet Dec. 29 at Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse in Cleveland in the Cleveland Classic.

- The Big Ten schedule has not been released but there will be two conference games in early December.

Penn Takes NBA Assistant Post

Scoonie Penn on Aug. 5 accepted an assistant coaching job with the Memphis Grizzlies after two seasons as OSU's director of recruiting and player development. He joins the staff of new head coach Taylor Jenkins.

Penn played for the Buckeyes from 1998-2000 and was a two-time All-Big Ten selection, the conference player of the year in 1999 and a second team All-American in 2000. He helped OSU reach the Final Four in 1999.

Penn's replacement has not been named.

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Klein Resigns Over Potential Policy Violations

Ohio State's football team may have had a summer wrapped in significantly less controversy than the one prior, but the women's basketball team has some of its own this time around.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Wyatt Crosher

Associate head coach Patrick Klein resigned from the program on Aug. 2 following an announcement from the university that it would be investigating allegations that Klein violated NCAA rules and university policy.

"On Friday, July 26, Klein was placed on administrative leave while the university investigates," a statement from Ohio State's athletic department said. "Ohio State is working diligently to conclude its review of this matter."

Klein made the decision to resign amid the allegations. In his resignation letter, Klein apologized for the mistakes that he made and said he realizes he "should have used better judgment."

"Over the course of the past two weeks it has come to my attention that some of my actions as a coach have not adhered strictly to NCAA rules," Klein said. "I've also been made aware that in some instances, my communications with some student-athletes have been too informal or in some cases even inappropriate, violating university policy."

Klein also said why he believes he needed to resign at this time in the investigation.

"I've determined that it's in my best interests, as well as the program's, to resign and take time to reflect, spend time with family, and focus on the next chapter of my professional career," he said. "I wish Coach (Kevin) McGuff

and the Ohio State women's basketball program nothing but continued success."

Klein was on Ohio State's staff for eight seasons, serving five seasons as an assistant coach before McGuff promoted him to associate head coach. Prior to his time with the Buckeyes, Klein was an assistant coach at the University of Illinois and attended Ohio State as a student.

2019-20 Non-Conference Schedule Locked In

Although Big Ten play is still up in the air, the non-conference schedule has been decided for the Buckeyes in the 2019-20 season.

Starting with an exhibition game against Urbana on Nov. 3, the Buckeyes start the regular season against Valparaiso on Nov. 10 then move to a game on Nov. 13 against Cincinnati. Following games against Ohio University and Kent State, the Buckeyes will again play women's basketball powerhouse UConn on Nov. 24 at Value City Arena. Ohio State lost to the Huskies 85-53 in 2018.

Ohio State follows up the UConn matchup by heading to Las Vegas for the South Point Shootout, where the Buckeyes will play South Dakota and Northern Iowa over Thanksgiving weekend.

On Dec. 5, the Buckeyes have a home matchup against Louisville, a team that finished No. 6 in the final coaches poll a season ago. Between matchups with Samford and Sacramento State, Ohio State will play Stanford on Dec. 15, this time on the road.

In 2017, Ohio State went up against both Louisville and Stanford, losing to the Cardinals 95-90 in overtime but beating Stanford handedly in the season opener, 85-64.

Last season, the Buckeyes went 4-5 in a nonconference schedule that was cut two games short due to the California wildfires, which canceled matchups against Stanford and Sacramento State.

Aixa Wone Aranaz, Spain Finish Third

One of Ohio State's 2019 prospects had a busy summer. Aixa Wone Aranaz, a forward in the Buckeyes' 2019 class, played on Spain's U19 team in the FIBA World Cup in Bangkok, Thailand, and helped Spain end the tournament with a third-place finish.

Wone Aranaz finished the tournament with 8.7 points and 6.4 rebounds per game, including a pair of 14-point performances. One of those 14-point games came in the quarterfinals against China, Wone Aranaz's most complete game of the tournament, where she also tallied nine rebounds and three assists on 6-of-14 shooting.

A 6-3 forward, Wone Aranaz did find a way to show off some range, hitting on nine of her 19 three-point attempts in the seven matches. She was a major contributor to Spain, averaging 27.1 minutes a game and finishing the World Cup as a combined plus-50 when on the floor.

Wone Aranaz has previously helped lead Spain to the U16 FIBA European Championship, averaging 8.6 points and 4.1 rebounds per game. She was also a member of the U17 team in 2017.

The No. 15-ranked international prospect by ProspectsNation, Wone Aranaz was born in Barcelona, Spain, and will be joining the Buckeyes as a freshman for the 2019-20 season.

2020 Class Gains Another Five-Star

With an already impressive 2019 class coming in, Ohio State does not seem to be getting complacent when it comes to recruiting.

Last month, the Buckeyes earned a verbal commit from five-star point guard Kateri Poole, Ohio State's third member of the 2020 class. Poole is ranked the No. 16 prospect in the 2020 class and No. 7 at the position, according to ESPN.

Poole is listed at 5-8 and goes to Monsignor Scanlan in Bronx, New York. Her ESPN

grade of 98 is the highest in Ohio State's 2020 class, and Poole joins a pair of Ohio recruits from Westerville South High School.

Forward Gabby Hutcherson and guard Anyssa Jones, both with an ESPN grade of 90, are also verbal commits for the Buckeyes following a 2019 class that was ranked No. 3 in the country, highlighted by a trio of five-star prospects in Kierstan Bell, Rikki Harris and Jacy Sheldon.

Harper Joins Women's 3-on-3

Former Ohio State women's basketball player Linnae Harper has joined the first professional U.S. women's 3x3 team ever. The team, which is called Force 10 and was put together by Force 10 management, who also owns the WNBA team Seattle Storm, will compete in the Red Bull 3x3 circuit.

The team consists of Harper, Alexis Peterson, Cierra Burdick and Megan Huff. Harper, Peterson and Burdick were all WNBA players, while Huff was drafted this year by the New York Liberty. Burdick was part of a gold medal team for the U.S. in the FIBA 3x3 World Cup in 2014.

The 3x3 format will be moving into the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

Harper has played one season in the WNBA with the Chicago Sky. After going undrafted in the 2018 WNBA draft, Harper appeared in 24 games for the Sky, averaging 2.0 points, 0.8 rebounds and 1.0 assists per game while shooting 40.4 percent from the field in 6.1 minutes per game.

In her time at Ohio State, Harper — who started her career at Kentucky — received Big Ten Sixth Player of the Year honors in 2017 and was a member of the All-Big Ten Second Team and Big Ten All-Defensive Team in her final year.



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Former Softball Standouts Team Up In NPF

By JOE DEMPSEY
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Lilli Piper and Emily Clark, longtime friends and teammates, excelled for the Ohio State softball team the past three seasons and were both selected by the Cleveland Comets in the 2019 National Pro Fastpitch draft.

The Comets drafted Piper with the No. 15 pick (third round) and Clark at No. 16 (fourth round), following their senior season when they led Ohio State to a 35-18 record with a 17-6 ledger against Big Ten opponents.

"When you get to the draft it's kind of scary because you don't really know where you're going to end up," Clark told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "But just because Lilli and I are so close and we've played with each other for a while now, it just makes me more comfortable having her here. When I saw we were going to the same team, it was exciting just because I still get to play with her and she knows me as a person and a player, so during this time – it's probably not the easiest time – she can help me and I help her."

Piper and Clark teamed up again in Cleveland after serving as a dynamic duo for the Scarlet and Gray the past three seasons, but their bond began long before. Piper and Clark played on the same travel softball team and became close at a young age, and they will have each other to lean on at the pro level.

Clark, who could aptly be described as a coach's dream, served as OSU's captain and provided her teammates with a relaxing, yet competitive, leader they could turn to in times of trouble. Morgan Ray, the Buckeyes' ace and an NFCA first-team All-Midwest Region selection, spoke highly of her former teammate.

"Emily is one of my best friends and she and I lived together for my first two years, so we have a special bond and we definitely have a lot of fun," Ray said of Clark. "She's my rock on the field and she really gets me out there."

"She's a calming presence for me. But she's very intuitive – she's like that for a lot of people on our team. She understands people and the way that they play, and she's really competitive, just like Lilli. They want to win – whatever it takes to make it happen."

Piper, Ray and Ohio State head coach Kelly



OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

TEAMMATES AGAIN – Former Ohio State shortstop Lilli Piper (22) and second baseman Emily Clark will play together professionally for the Cleveland Comets.

Kovach Schoenly all repeatedly mentioned the word "consistent" when talking about Clark, who earned NFCA first-team All-Midwest Region honors as a freshman and senior and was a second-team selection as a sophomore and junior.

Clark came to Columbus as a catcher but spent most of her Buckeye career at second base, where she posted a .977 fielding percentage as a senior. Kovach Schoenly told BSB that Clark's versatility will help her carve out a role in the pros.

"She's probably perfect for the program because she's so versatile," Schoenly said of Clark. "Depending on what their need for that day is, whether they need her to catch or play outfield or second base, she can do all of it. And when she gets used to playing at that level with the pitching, she's going to definitely have consistency about her that they'll enjoy."

Clark was always pretty sure she wanted to play softball at a high level, making her decision to commit to Ohio State an easy one. Piper, however, did not pursue a collegiate softball career

initially because of her affinity for basketball.

A Cuyahoga Falls (Ohio) Walsh Jesuit product, Piper accepted a scholarship to play basketball at Akron, where she played in 29 games as a freshman, highlighted by a 24-point, nine-rebound performance in the MAC semifinals.

While Clark, a Richwood (Ohio) North Union product, excelled at the plate and in the field as a freshman for the Buckeyes, she kept in touch with her old travel-ball teammate. Clark made sure Piper knew she was welcome at Ohio State, and Kovach Schoenly was grateful the power-hitting shortstop was considering the Scarlet and Gray. Piper hit the ground running as a sophomore at Ohio State, leading the team in batting average (.421), slugging percentage (.787), hits (75), home runs (18) and RBI (53), which were all good enough for top five in the Big Ten.

As a longtime teammate, Clark said she knew Piper was capable of the incredible stat lines she posted, including a series against Maryland when she hit .727 with two homers, eight RBI and an astounding 1.364 slugging percentage to earn Big

Ten Player of the Week as a sophomore.

"It doesn't really surprise me," Clark said of Piper's hitting prowess. "For Lilli, she's always been consistent. And she's known to hit the long ball, and she's known as a clutch player. It honestly doesn't shock me one bit the numbers that she puts up."

Piper somehow improved in her second season as a Buckeye, breaking the school record with 20 home runs and ranking third in Big Ten history with an .876 slugging percentage. Beyond being a record-breaking hitter, Piper won over her teammates with her love for them and her passion for the game.

"Lilli's awesome," Ray said of Piper. "She's a character and she keeps everything interesting and she makes it really fun. She loves us and she always is really clear about the fact that she plays for us. And that's really nice to know that that person is behind you on the field. You know she'll give her all for you."

Continuing to improve, Piper hit .430 her senior year and ranked No. 1 in batting in Big Ten games (.574), becoming the first Buckeye to hit .400 every year and finishing with the No. 2 average in program history (.419).

Meanwhile, the ever-consistent Clark etched her name in the Ohio State record books with 169 RBI (third), 40 homers (fifth) and 42 doubles (fifth). The Prospect, Ohio, native worked tirelessly on her game, even spending time refining her swing with Piper, and became an NSCA third-team All-American as a senior.

"That's a goal I had for four years," Clark told BSB. "Going in, I knew that I wanted to help the program get somewhere, but I had individual goals and All-American as probably the highest goal I wanted to get. It was a long process, but at the end of the day when I did get that award, it did mean a lot and I felt a lot of relief, like 'Finally, I finally got it.'"

Also rewriting the OSU record books, Piper notched 48 long balls (third), 153 runs (sixth) and 144 RBI (tied for sixth) in just three seasons. The native of Norton, Ohio, joined Sam Marder (2008-10) as the only Buckeyes to ever be named three-time All-Americans.

"It's exciting," Piper said of the honor. "As you grow up, that's something that you always strive for – to be the best that you can personally be, but also to leave a mark on the program."

BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL

April 13 SPRING GAME, Gray 35, Scarlet 17.
Aug. 31 FLORIDA ATLANTIC, 12 p.m.
Sept. 7 CINCINNATI, 12 p.m.; **14** at Indiana, 12 p.m.; **21** MIAMI (OHIO); **28** at Nebraska.
Oct. 5 MICHIGAN STATE, 7:30 p.m.; **18** at Northwestern, 8:30 p.m.; **26** WISCONSIN.
Nov. 9 MARYLAND; **16** at Rutgers; **23** PENN STATE; **30** at Michigan, 12 p.m..
Dec. 7 Big Ten Championship Game at Indianapolis, 8 p.m.

CROSS COUNTRY

Aug. 30 Miami (Ohio) at Oxford, Ohio.
Sept. 14 Commodore Classic at Nashville, Tenn.; **28** Ohio State Invitational at Columbus, Ohio.
Oct. 18 Nuttycomb Wisconsin Invitational at Madison, Wisc.;
Nov. 3 Big Ten Championships at Columbus, Ohio;
15 NCAA Regional Championships at Madison, Wisc.;
23 NCAA Championships at Terre Haute, Ind.

FIELD HOCKEY

Aug. 17 OHIO (exhibition); **25** at Michigan (exhibition); **30** UMASS, 4 p.m.
Sept. 2 BOSTON, Noon; **6** at James Madison, 6 p.m.; **8** at Virginia, 1 p.m.; **13** CENTRAL MICHIGAN, 4 p.m.; **15** LOUISVILLE, 1 p.m.; **20** NORTHWESTERN, 3 p.m.; **27** at Iowa, 3 p.m.; **29** at Indiana, Noon.
Oct. 6 at Ohio, 2 p.m.; **11** MICHIGAN, 4 p.m.;

13 STANFORD, 3 p.m.; **18** RUTGERS, 3 p.m.; **20** MARYLAND, Noon; **25** at Penn State, 6 p.m.; **27** at Kent State, 1 p.m.

Nov. 2 at Michigan State, 1 p.m.; **7** Big Ten Tournament Quarterfinals at Penn State, TBA; **8** Big Ten Tournament Semifinals at Penn State, TBA; **10** Big Ten Tournament Championship at Penn State, TBA.

MEN'S SOCCER

Aug. 17 XAVIER (exhibition), T 1-1; **20** MT. VERNON NAZARENE (exhibition), W 7-1; **24** at Butler (exhibition); **30** WOLSTEIN CLASSIC vs. CSUN, 7 p.m.
Sept. 1 WOLSTEIN CLASSIC vs. UIC, 3 p.m.; **6** Dayton Classic vs. Dayton, 7:30 p.m.; **8** Dayton Classic vs. EIU, 5 p.m.; **13** at Bowling Green, 7 p.m.; **17** at South Florida, 7 p.m.; **21** PENN STATE, 7 p.m.; **24** WEST VIRGINIA, 7 p.m.; **27** at Northwestern, 8 p.m.

Oct. 2 MICHIGAN, 7 p.m.; **6** at Rutgers, 11 a.m.; **12** CLEVELAND STATE, 7 p.m.; **16** at Kentucky, 7 p.m.; **19** at Michigan State, 7 p.m.; **25** MARYLAND, 7 p.m.; **29** at Indiana, 7 p.m.

Nov. 3 WISCONSIN, 3 p.m.; **9** Big Ten Tournament Play in Game, TBA; **10** Big Ten Tournament Quarterfinals, TBA; **15** Big Ten Semifinals, TBA; **17** Big Ten Tournament Final, TBA.

WOMEN'S SOCCER

Aug. 22 LOUISVILLE, 7 p.m.; **25** MISSOURI, 1 p.m.; **28** at UCF, 6 p.m.
Sept. 1 at South Florida, 6 p.m.; **6** at Texas

A&M, 9 p.m.; **8** at TCU, 8 p.m.; **13** MIAMI (OH), 7 p.m.; **15** OHIO, 6 p.m.; **19** MICHIGAN STATE, 8 p.m.; **22** MICHIGAN, 2 p.m.; **27** at Wisconsin, 6 p.m.; **29** at Minnesota, 2 p.m.

Oct. 3 MARYLAND, 7 p.m.; **6** PENN STATE, 2 p.m.; **10** at Purdue, 8 p.m.; **13** at Indiana, Noon; **17** NORTHWESTERN, 7 p.m.; **20** ILLINOIS, 2 p.m.; **27** at Iowa, 2 p.m.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL

Aug. 30 LEHIGH, Noon; TEXAS TECH, **8** p.m.; **31** VCU, 7 p.m.

Sept. 6 at Pittsburgh, 8 p.m.; **7** vs. Duquesne at Pittsburgh, Penn., 11 a.m.; vs. Green Bay at Pittsburgh, Penn., 6 p.m.; **13** vs. Tulane at Bowling Green, Kent., 2 p.m.; vs. Western Kentucky at Bowling Green, Kent., 8 p.m.; **14** vs. Bowling Green at Bowling Green, Kent., 5 p.m.; **19** MIAMI (OH), 6 p.m.; **20** ILLINOIS STATE, 10 a.m.; DAYTON, 8 p.m.; **25** at Maryland, 6 p.m.; **29** at Michigan, 2 p.m.

Oct. 4 MICHIGAN STATE, 7 p.m.; **6** MICHIGAN, 1 p.m.; **11** at Rutgers, 7 p.m.; **12** at Penn State, 7 p.m.; **16** IOWA, 8 p.m.; **19** PURDUE, 7 p.m.; **23** RUTGERS, 6 p.m.; **26** at Illinois, 6 p.m.; **30** at Minnesota, 8 p.m.

Nov. 2 MARYLAND, 7 p.m.; **8** WISCONSIN, 7 p.m.; **10** MINNESOTA, Noon; **15** at Purdue, 7 p.m.; **16** at Indiana, 7 p.m.; **22** NORTHWESTERN, 7 p.m.; **24** ILLINOIS, 1 p.m.; **29** at Iowa, 8 p.m.; **30** at Nebraska, TBA.

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All Eyes Are Focused On Ryan Day's Debut

Ryan Day will start his first full season as a head coach, and there couldn't be a bigger stage for a first-timer than the Ohio State football program.

COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

Even though he led the Buckeyes into the 2018 campaign for three games due to the Urban Meyer suspension, it isn't the same as heading up your own team, your own staff and your entire football organization. The expectations speak for themselves, and they are indeed lofty.

Following Urban Meyer

Most head coaches come into a program that has not been successful and there is a desire and often a demand to do things considerably different from your predecessor. In those situations, there is normally a complete, or nearly complete, staff turnover as the new head coach is expected to bring in assistant coaches he has known or worked with in the past. Those assistants are to show 100 percent loyalty to the head coach as he institutes his own philosophy into the program.

New head coaches, even experienced ones, are given time to prove their worth in

leading a successful transition. University administrations know it will take a few seasons to rebuild a program in terms of recruiting enough good players to win enough games to prove the hire was a good one.

The Ryan Day hire is all but normal in terms of a head coaching change.

First of all, he is following one of the most successful head coaches in all of college football, a coach who won 90 percent of his games at an institution that demands success. Urban Meyer not only won a ton of games but also beat his archrival every time his teams took to the field.

League championships, a national title and numerous bowl or playoff appearances marked the Urban Meyer era at Ohio State. Coach Meyer consistently brought in top-10 recruiting classes to the university and left with the cupboard far from bare in terms of athletic talent. To follow a head coach like that is indeed a tall order to live up to, and only time will tell if Ryan Day can live up to the expectations.

What Day Brings To The Table

Even though Ryan Day has only those three games of head coaching experience during the Meyer suspension, he is a man with a healthy résumé. As a player, he was a high school quarterback and defensive back who was the Gatorade Player of the Year in his home state of New Hampshire. He went on to break nearly every quarterback record at the University of New Hampshire, where his offensive coordinator, Chip Kelly, taught him the game that became his passion.

After graduation, Day would go on to coach at schools such as Temple and Boston College as well as stints in the pro ranks with the Philadelphia Eagles and the San Francisco 49ers. It was with the Niners that he would serve as quarterbacks coach for his former mentor Chip Kelly. Prior to his full-time coaching jobs, Day would spend a season as a graduate assistant in 2005 for first-year University of Florida head coach Urban Meyer. The point being, even though Ryan Day doesn't have years of head coaching experience, he knows the game, especially on the offensive side of the ball.

Ryan Day also knows how to recruit. In most cases, a head coaching change at the end of a football season results in a loss of already committed recruits, and those high schoolers who are "on the fence" often shy away from a school that has a new head coach stepping up to run the program. Against those odds, Day was able to hang on to nearly every committed athlete and even added more outstanding players to the 2019 recruiting class.

To add to his proven abilities as a recruiter, Ryan Day landed transfer Justin Fields, and the Buckeyes are on target to bring in a top-five recruiting class for 2020. There is no doubt the on-field success of this year's team will have a big influence on the final makeup of next year's class, but for right now, Ohio State football recruiting hasn't lost a beat.

Day And OSU Traditions

Since the success of Woody Hayes as head football coach, there has been a tendency for Ohio State athletic directors to look first for new head coaches who have some ties to the state. Woody was from Ohio and was a winning high school and college coach before OSU athletics director Dick Larkins hired him to take over the helm of the football program in 1951. After Woody the university turned to a former Buckeye player and assistant coach who also had proved himself as a top-notch high school and collegiate head coach by the name of Earle Bruce.

Later on, two more coaches with strong Ohio connections, Jim Tressel and Urban Meyer, would serve as Ohio State head football coaches. Ryan Day along with John Cooper are the only modern-era hires to become head coach of the

Buckeyes who have no direct Ohio ties.

Day, who came in as an assistant in 2017, found out quickly how deep the Ohio State traditions are embedded into the program. Whether you're talking about the Ohio State-Michigan rivalry, the "Shoe," Buckeye Grove or "Hang on Sloopy," the passion for Ohio State University and its football program cannot be matched. I truly believe Ryan Day understands what it's all about and that he is truly humbled to be the head coach of the Buckeyes.

The Right Moves

One of the goals of the new head coach is not only to understand the deep traditions of Ohio State football but to get to know some of the key people who are part of the Buckeye legacy. Day is going out of his way to make former players and coaches feel comfortable with himself and his staff. He is extremely personable and even inquisitive when talking about the program.

He wanted to know, for example, the origin of the "Silver Bullets" on defense. Day wants to know the "whats and whys" when seeking out answers to the way things were done in the past. He has given new life to the former players' summer golf outing, which had all but died in recent years.

Coach Day has opened up the doors to practice for football alumni and even designated the last day of August training camp as a special day for former players. Former players were treated to lunch and a tour of the WHAC and were allowed to attend the final day of camp practice.

Ryan Day also understands the importance of the relationship and open line of communication between himself and the Ohio high school coaches community. He is taking huge steps to foster that relationship.

In my opinion Ryan Day, even though not an Ohio native, is doing all the right things to better understand and appreciate the rich traditions of Ohio State football. In the long run he will be judged by how many games and championships he wins along with the number of playoff appearances he makes. Of course, the success of his tenure at Ohio State will also be directly linked to his success against the "Team up North." Ryan Day really appreciates the opportunities, the challenges and the responsibilities that go along with being the head football coach at Ohio State. I wish him well!

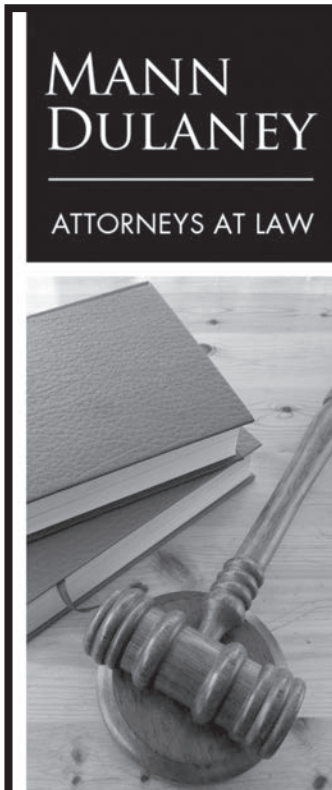


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Dobbins Returns To Form

Analysis about two big issues has dominated discussion of the prospects for Ohio State making a run at the national championship in 2019: Ryan Day as a first-year head coach, and Justin Fields as a much heralded, though unproven, quarterback.

EXNER POINT Rich Exner

Yet for me, there is another key question that could play even bigger into the team's success: Which J.K. Dobbins will we see in 2019? The J.K. Dobbins of 2017 would provide an important piece to a potential run at the playoffs. The J.K. Dobbins of 2018 would leave more of the offensive burden on others, including Fields.

Big plays from big-time backs Ezekiel Elliott and Maurice Clarett were keys in Ohio State's last two national championships. Why the concern this year? After all, both versions of Dobbins have provided 1,000-yard rushing seasons in high-scoring Ohio State offenses.

Thinking back to the last two seasons, there are visions of Dobbins breaking onto the college football scene his freshman year as an explosive, shifty back – the type who could be counted on for big bursts of yardage at almost any point.

However, the Dobbins of last year, while consistent, doesn't bring back memories of nearly as many electrifying plays.

I got to thinking about this more after recently reading cleveland.com's Doug Lesmerises drop this compelling stat: Dobbins ranked 16th in the nation last year for carries (230) yet just 48th for rushing yards (1,053).

That caused me to start looking more at Dobbins version 1.0 vs. Dobbins 2.0.

Both versions rushed for 1,000-plus yards, an accomplishment not to scoff at, even with the extended seasons that have lasted 14 games each of the last two years. Only 25 Ohio State players in history have even one 1,000-yard season. Just nine have done it at least twice.

If Dobbins can three-peat this year, he'll be just the second back in Ohio State history to top 1,000 yards three times. To date, only Archie Griffin has had three 1,000-yard seasons. But during his freshman year, Dobbins did something that stands out even among this elite group of 1,000-yard rushers.

Dobbins averaged an incredible 7.2 yards per carry. On average, the OSU 1,000-yard backs have averaged 5.6 yards a carry.

Put another way, Dobbins as a freshman got 28.6 percent more yards per carry than a typical OSU 1,000-yard rusher. That translated to nearly 310 extra yards during the course of the season.

Among the 35 1,000-yard seasons by 25 separate backs in OSU history, Dobbins' average of 7.2 yards per carry ranks second best to Carlos Hyde, who averaged 7.2 in rushing for 1,521 yards in 2013.

Now, move forward to Dobbins' sophomore season a year ago. He again rushed for 1,000 yards. Despite sharing time with Mike Weber, Dobbins actually had more carries as a sophomore (230) than he did as a freshman (194).

Yet, his yardage slipped to 1,053 – the result of averaging just 4.6 yards a carry. And while his freshman season ranked second all-time at OSU among 1,000-yard rushers for yards-per-carry, his sophomore season ranked third from the bottom in this group. The only lower numbers were produced in a different era long ago – John Brockington's 4.4 in 1970 and Jim Otis' 4.56 in 1969. (Dobbins' extended number was 4.58.)

I'm optimistic that Dobbins will return to that 2017 explosiveness in 2019. He clearly is the team's No. 1 back heading into the season. There should be little concern about splitting time, allowing him to run with more confidence. And to listen to what he is saying, he sounds extremely motivated.

Plus, we know the raw talent is there.

I dug through OSU rushing stats going back a half-century and found this: No one has rushed for more yards during his first two years on the field at Ohio State than Dobbins. With 2,456 yards, he is just ahead of Griffin (2,444) as a freshman and sophomore.

The rest of the top 10: Chris Wells (2,185), Elliott (2,140), Braxton Miller (1,986), Robert Smith (1,945), Weber (1,722), Antonio Pittman (1,712), J.T. Barrett (1,620) and Ron Springs (1,555).

Notably absent from the top 10 are Eddie George, who went on to win a Heisman Trophy and now ranks third all-time in career yards with 3,768, and Tim Spencer, who ranks fourth all-time with 3,553.

Dobbins has a head start on all those guys heading into year three, and he could prove to be a very important key to a very big Ohio State season.

Predictions

It's almost required for anyone writing about any team in any sport to make a prediction.

What do I think of the 2019 Buckeyes? The same I have thought each year since Urban Meyer fully loaded up the team with solid recruits. They could win the national title.

The talent is there if things fall right. This means no letdowns (like that famous loss to Michigan State in 1998) and aggressiveness to fix fixable problems (like the big plays OSU allowed last year before Purdue finally took advantage of that hole in a big way). But Ohio State heads into the season with the talent to win each game. The Buckeyes will probably be the betting favorite in at least the first 11 games.

The ultimate answer of whether OSU can run the table, I submit, will come from another place. How good will Michigan be? Or perhaps how good will Penn State be in 2019? Those are bigger unknowns.

A 12-0 regular season is a sound prediction. But 10-2 wouldn't be a total surprise.

Ticket Pricing

It seems that the price of tickets, as set by Ohio State, has gotten out of control. So I checked around for a comparison to other schools.

For Ohio State, the face value for most seats this season is \$60 for the Florida Atlantic game, \$65 for Miami, \$90 for Cincinnati, \$92 for Maryland, \$147 for Michigan State, \$170 for Wisconsin and \$198 for Penn State.

A handful of tickets are priced differently: \$48-159 for the top four rows of B Deck, and \$185-223 for box/club seats.

At Michigan, end-zone tickets range from \$60 for Middle Tennessee and Army to \$145 for the Notre Dame, Michigan State and Ohio State games. The top seats are \$100 to \$190. Prices for the bigger games are higher now on the secondary market. A \$150 contribution gives anyone the chance to buy season tickets.

At Penn State, ticket prices range from a low of \$45-140 for the Idaho game to \$120-240 for the Michigan game.

At Michigan State, tickets start at \$50 for any game on this season's schedule.

And at Notre Dame, tickets are priced at \$45-145 for games against New Mexico and Bowling Green, and \$65-165 for Virginia Tech, Navy and Boston College. Ticket pricing is **not** listed for Virginia, which is sold out.



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Buckeyes Primed To Win Another Big Ten Title

The page has been turned on the Urban Meyer era at Ohio State, but given the amount of talent the Buckeyes have amassed in recent seasons it wouldn't be any kind of shock if this year's chapter has the same ending as last year's – meaning another Big Ten crown and a Rose Bowl berth, at the very least.

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

Offensive guru Ryan Day, who molded neophyte starter Dwayne Haskins into a first-round NFL draft pick, takes over the whole show, and though he lacks experience as a top dog, the Buckeyes did flourish during a three-game “audition” last season while Meyer was suspended. Day is cut from the Chip Kelly mold offensively and has gained high praise from those in the game, but the question remains whether he can handle the white-hot spotlight that comes with being head coach in Columbus. If the Buckeyes improve on a rare poor year defensively and if the offensive line jells faster than expected, then it could be a banner first season for Day, maybe even as good as Meyer's initial year – 12-0.

Most eyes will be on the quarterback, but what's new? That's always the case, and Georgia transfer Justin Fields has at least looked like he can handle the scrutiny. He said the right things during fall camp, and now it simply comes down to his ability to process the playbook. There aren't many worries about his physical skills as he was a former winner at the Elite 11, and it's likely Day will tailor the offense to his skill set, which means a return to the RPO (run-pass option).

The backfield and receivers are experienced and talented, with J.K. Dobbins leading the way for the first group and K.J. Hill – who will almost certainly leave Ohio State with most of the important receiving records – showing the way among the latter. There is a little bit of intrigue with the backup runners, but the receiving corps is deep. Austin Mack, Binjimen Victor and Chris Olave would be the top dogs on most teams but are just part of the offense at OSU. Throw in Jaelen Gill, Jaylen Harris, C.J. Saunders and freshman sensation Garrett Wilson and the Buckeyes have the potential for huge production.

The offensive line is a work in progress and probably the most worrisome unit on the squad. There's no one who is a lead-pipe cinch for all-league honors, though Rutgers transfer Jonah Jackson is close. The guard brings experience and a nasty streak to the table, and he should be able to show the way for the Buckeyes' younger linemen. Don't be shocked if guard Wyatt Davis becomes a star this season.

The defense has to be better than it was last season, when things were made far too complicated. The overhauled coaching staff appears to be in favor of putting the players in position to succeed and will let them play. That's a recipe for success if you ask me.

Up front, Chase Young could be the best defensive player in college football. It's a testament to how good he was last year that the Buckeyes' pressure numbers looked like

Nick Bosa hadn't missed most of the season. Young had the rare lineman triple-double in 2018, posting 11 sacks, 14 hits and 50 hurries as defined by Pro Football Focus, and led all of college football in overall pressures (75) as a sophomore. Young played 470 pass rush snaps last season and generated pressure on nearly 14 percent of them. That is getting it done, folks.

He will no doubt face more double teams this season, so it will be imperative for Jonathon Cooper, Tyreke Smith, Zach Harrison and whoever else is in the rotation to produce. Robert “B.B.” Landers, Davon Hamilton, Jashon Cornell, Tommy Togiai and Taron Vincent all have the ability to shine inside and will be an important part of the defensive attack.

If the line produces, things should get easier for the linebackers, which will be a welcome change considering how poorly that group played in 2018. Often a step late and confused, the linebacker play held the Buckeyes back more than any other unit on the team. All three starters return, which is both good and bad. Good because they have experience, bad because they were a big part of last year's poor play.

Malik Harrison is the best of the group, possessing speed and toughness, and he is very good in coverage. Maybe health was the reason for Tuf Borland's problems, but he sure looked slow out in space last season. He's very instinctive, and maybe being 100 percent helps this year. Pete Werner has drawn praise from the coaching staff as a guy who can do a little bit of everything, but he won't wow you with anything. There is excitement underneath as rising players Teradja Mitchell, Dallas Gant and Baron Browning have all had their moments in fall camp. Brendon White will move up to a hybrid linebacker/safety spot this year as the defense changes, which should allow him to use his speed and aggression to make plays.

The secondary also had its moments of futility last year, but this group actually elicits a lot of confidence, much of it due to the addition of coach Jeff Hafley. Possessing an NFL pedigree, Hafley has made some changes in technique, and it should result in more success.

There are playmakers all over the place, starting with corner Jeff Okudah. Touted as a future first-round draft pick, Okudah showcased his abilities in the Rose Bowl victory over Washington. Okudah was targeted 48 times last year, allowing just 18 catches (37.5 percent) and one touchdown. He has elite speed, size and the ability to press, and he looks like the next great OSU corner. Damon Arnette is a vet on the other side, and Cameron Brown, Tyreke Johnson and Sevyn Banks could get into the mix when the Buckeyes go to nickel. In Jordan Fuller, Shaun Wade and Isaiah Pryor, OSU has an outstanding group of safeties, and Amir Riep and Josh Proctor provide depth.

People often overlook special teams, but that has been a huge part of OSU's success in recent seasons. Drue Chrisman is one of the premier punters in college football, with just one touchback and 29 punts inside the 20 last year. That's a weapon. Blake Haubeil was solid in his first year as a starter, and the return game could be big time, with Hill, Wilson, Demario McCall and Gill all in the mix.

I would be surprised if the Buckeyes lost more than once this season. Yeah, I know, people have some concerns about Day, as

this is his first full-time head coaching gig. But he is exceedingly bright, is a master at coming up with things on the fly and has truly seemed to make a seamless transition to the top spot. I don't have too many concerns.

The early-season trip to Nebraska could be a stumble as the offense may still be finding itself. It will likely be a night game, and the Huskers look poised for a big jump this season in the second year under Scott Frost. Having Michigan State and Penn State at home make both less worrisome, and while Michigan is in Ann Arbor, and while this is Jim Harbaugh's best team, I won't pick the Wolverines to win until I actually see it.

Big Ten Picks

East Division

1. Ohio State (12-1, 8-1)

1. Michigan (10-2, 8-1)
3. Michigan State (9-3, 6-3)
4. Penn State (8-4, 5-4)
5. Indiana (6-6, 3-6)
6. Maryland (3-9, 1-8)
6. Rutgers (2-10, 1-8)

West Division

1. Nebraska (9-4, 6-3)
1. Northwestern (8-4, 6-3)
3. Iowa (8-4, 5-4)
3. Minnesota (8-4, 5-4)
5. Wisconsin (7-5, 1-8)
6. Purdue (5-7, 3-6)
7. Illinois (5-7, 2-7)

Big Ten Championship Game: Ohio State over Nebraska.

Offensive Player of the Year: Jonathan Taylor, Wisconsin; **Defensive Player of the Year:** Chase Young, Ohio State; **Coach of the Year:** Scott Frost, Nebraska; **Top Newcomer:** QB Hunter Johnson/Northwestern

Big Ten Bowls: Ohio State (Rose); Michigan (Citrus); Nebraska (Outback); Michigan State (Redbox); Penn State (Gator); Northwestern (Holiday); Iowa (Pinstripe); Minnesota (Military); Wisconsin (Armed Forces); Indiana (Quick Lane).

I've talked about the Buckeyes already, and my thoughts on other league contenders follow.

If Michigan is ever going to knock the Buckeyes off of their perch under Harbaugh, this could be the year. A baker's dozen starters return, including eight on offense, and Josh Gattis comes in from Alabama to run the offense in a style that should fit QB Shea Patterson much better than Harbaugh's favored pro style attack. There were some big losses on the defensive front, but defensive coordinator Don Brown is one of the best in America and should have his troops ready to go. A tricky game with Army precedes a conference slate that finds the Wolverines hosting top rivals Ohio State and Michigan State, as well as a midseason tilt with Notre Dame. Road games with Wisconsin and Penn State could be tough.

It was a classic “not as bad as their record” season for Michigan State in 2018 as Sparty was decimated by injuries and lost to Arizona State, Nebraska and Oregon by a combined seven points. QB Brian Lewerke was not good (8-11 TD-INT ratio) but battled injury much of the season. Now healthy, he should be more like the 2017 version (20-7), especially with a solid receiving corps and completely intact offensive line. The defense will be its usual snarling self and will keep MSU in every game. Going to Northwestern, Ohio State, Wisconsin and Michigan will be daunting.

Youth is the buzzword for Penn State,

which is the main reason they are seen as a step behind the league's top three. The Trace McSorley era is history, so the pressure is on Sean Clifford to run the Nittany Lions, who had their lowest point total in three seasons last year. The defense has a chance to be really good thanks to Brent Pry's aggressive scheme, one that netted 47 sacks a year ago. Penn State must go to Iowa, Michigan State and Ohio State but went 4-1 away from home in 2018 so maybe it pulls off an upset or two and challenges for the East Division crown.

The Big Ten West could be the most wide-open division in college football in 2019, with as many as five teams having a legit claim to the crown.

A lot of hype has surrounded Frost and Nebraska in year two, and though it went just 4-8 in 2018 it was a much better team by season's end. It lost to Northwestern by three, fell to Ohio State by five, blasted Minnesota and upset Michigan State before falling by a field goal late against Iowa. The schedule is manageable as Nebraska misses Michigan, Penn State and Sparty, and it hosts Ohio State. While it would be a huge shock for Frost to engineer an unbeaten turnaround in year two (as he did at UCF), eight or nine wins seems plausible.

Underestimate Pat Fitzgerald and Northwestern at your own peril – the Wildcats won the West last year, beating Sparty, Iowa and Minnesota on the road in the process. The defense should once again be hard-nosed, led by one of the better linebacker groups in the league, and the offense should be solid with Clemson transfer Hunter Johnson taking over at quarterback. We should know quickly how good the Wildcats are as they open at Stanford and host Michigan State three weeks later.

With just four starters back on defense, this could be the year when offense is highlighted more than defense for Iowa. The Hawkeyes will always be fundamentally sound and hard-nosed on D, but they have just four starters back, so much of the onus will be on QB Nate Stanley and a strong cast of skill players. An excellent O-line helps, but the schedule is tricky, with road swings to Iowa State, Northwestern, Michigan and Wisconsin. The season finale in Lincoln could determine the division champion.

Things have gradually improved at Minnesota under P.J. Fleck, and 2019 could produce another small step forward as nine are back on a potentially explosive offense. The ground game is bruising, and receiver Tyler Johnson is somehow under the radar despite catching 78 passes and scoring a dozen times last year. The defense was shaky last year, allowing six foes to score more than 30 points, but played well down the stretch. That should provide optimism, as should a schedule that misses OSU, Michigan and Penn State.

After four consecutive seasons of 10-plus wins, Wisconsin hit a speed bump last year and won just eight games. The offense was wildly inconsistent, largely due to quarterback play, and the normally stout defense allowed over 20 ppg for just the second time in the last seven years. While there are still questions under center – and around center, as four O-line starters depart – none exist in the backfield, where Jonathan Taylor is one of the best around. A tricky schedule means Wisconsin could be better this year but it may not show in the record.

Tough Big Ten Slate Easier Said Than Done

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

You may recall that in our June issue, upon my return from Las Vegas for the College Sports Publishers Association meeting, I expressed surprise that the virtually untested Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields had the third-best odds to win the Heisman Trophy in 2019, bettered only by those of Alabama's Tua Tagovailoa, last year's Heisman runner-up, and Trevor Lawrence, who led Clemson to the CFP national championship last season.

As you also may recall, I found this to be a fairly lofty expectation for a quarterback who had played few, if any, meaningful downs as a freshman at Georgia in 2018.

Before I go any further, let me say that this fact seems to bother me more than most of the people in the office or others that I have spoken to. I think everyone else takes it as an exciting positive for the Buckeyes that the team will be led by such a highly regarded young quarterback. I guess I am just more cynical than the average Buckeye fan.

What I didn't think to do at the time (thanks to our own Joe Dempsey for suggesting I do so) was check last year's BSB after my return from Vegas to see how the oddsmakers saw Dwayne Haskins, who ended up making a legitimate run at the Heisman in 2018, at the same time last year. Keep in my mind that while Haskins and Fields brought similar on-field experience to their ascension to the starter's role with the Buckeyes, Haskins had performed admirably on the biggest stage with his game-winning efforts against Michigan in place of the injured J.T. Barrett. Fields, meanwhile, had racked up the bulk of his college stats against the likes of Austin Peay, Middle Tennessee State and Massachusetts.

Fields was carrying 8-1 odds to win the Heisman, while at the same time last year Haskins was listed at 25-1 despite his efforts against the Wolverines. Interestingly, J.K. Dobbins was the better bet to win the Heisman than Haskins, in the eyes of the oddsmakers, with 11-1 odds in '18. After only gaining 1,053 yards in 2018, Dobbins was listed at 60-1 this time around. Hopefully he'll surprise some people, though if he has a big year I don't think it will surprise Buckeye fans.

As for Fields having a big year, like I said in this space back in June, "The guys in Vegas know their stuff. If they are only willing to pay eight dollars on every buck wagered on Fields if he wins the Heisman, that means they think he has a legitimate chance to win the coveted award. It's pretty exciting to think that the Ohio State football team has a player with that kind of talent."

So why do I bring this up now?

Well first of all, I actually wanted to address the comparison of Fields, Haskins and Dobbins and their odds in the July issue. However, I got so carried away recapping our Interview Issue that I ran out of space. Many thanks to the many readers who called, wrote or stopped me on the street to tell me how much they enjoyed what I think was one of our best Interview Issues ever.

I also bring it up now, on the eve of the 2019 football season, because I am worried that Buckeye fans may be overly optimistic about Ohio State's chances in 2019, fueled by such things as Fields' odds in Vegas. For all the hoopla surrounding him, Fields has never started a collegiate game before and is new to the Ohio State system.

Additionally, his team will be led by Ryan Day, who has never been a head coach at any level. Sure he looked good during his three-game audition last season. While he performed admirably, that was as interim coach, a far cry from being the CEO of an organization bigger

than many corporations.

And as I read through the stories and columns for this issue, some seem to find Ohio State's schedule this season a little less daunting than I do.

Let's see. There's a sure-to-be-fired-up Cincinnati led by Luke Fickell on the non-league slate. The Buckeyes play everyone's new darling Nebraska, traditional tough out Michigan State and defending west champion Northwestern, back-to-back-to-back. There's Wisconsin and back-to-back games against Penn State and Michigan to end the regular season. And is there an equivalent of Iowa (2017) or Purdue (2018) lurking? Certainly not Rutgers, but who knows with a team like Indiana or Maryland, a team which should have beaten the Buckeyes last season.

What could go wrong?

Maybe nothing. I'm only saying I wouldn't call my travel agent to make CFP Playoff arrangements just yet.

Fields should actually do just fine. He can lean on Dobbins – who I think has the better shot at the Heisman even though it has become a quarterback's award – while he gets his feet underneath him. I don't see him having the type of passing season that Haskins did last year (few could) but when he does elect to pass he has a great group of receivers to help him produce and a couple of offensive-minded coaches in Day and Kevin Wilson who should put him in a position to succeed.

Where I would be really looking if I were trying to handicap the offense is not at Fields, Dobbins or the receivers, but at the offensive line. Fields, Dobbins or the receivers will not excel if the Buckeyes cannot successfully replace four of the five starters up front. I am not overwhelmed by the big guys so far, but I don't know that much about them just yet. As I said, it's an area to watch, and if the line has even modest success, Ohio State will score more than its share of points, just as it did last season.

Which brings us to the area that Buckeye fans should really be watching – the defense!

Retired coach Urban Meyer had been stockpiling stellar defensive athletes for years, yet suddenly Ohio State was fielding arguably its worst defense in the Buckeye Sports Bulletin era, dating back to 1981.

Those stellar athletes didn't become stiff overnight. There was something else going on last season, and the fact that Day all but cleaned coaching house on the defensive side of the ball, retaining only defensive line coach Larry Johnson – one of the best assistant coaches that Ohio State has ever had – speaks volumes.

Something veteran defensive end Jonathon Cooper said recently struck me.

"I feel like it will be fixed this year," Cooper said of last year's problems on defense. "There was something in the defense that was resisting us from playing the way we were supposed to play. All I know is that is going to be fixed and we're going to play with that chip on our shoulder."

I have full confidence in Johnson's defensive line, the best unit on last year's defense even with the unfortunate loss of Nick Bosa in the season's third game. Next man up. Chase Young took the mantle from Bosa, who had taken it from brother Joey with a defensive lineman of the year performance from Tyquan

Lewis in between.

There was no such smooth transition from one year to the next in the back seven, however. In fact, several of the backline defenders seemed to take a step back.

Among the players I will be watching to see if they rebound under the new regime are cornerback Damon Arnette and linebacker Tuf Borland.

I think most would agree that Arnette underachieved, as did so many of his defensive cohorts, last season. He seemed out the door to the NFL but eventually elected to stay for his senior season after being impressed by incoming co-defensive coordinator and defensive backs coach Jeff Hafley.

To listen to Arnette now and read between the lines, he too gives clues that there was something rotten in Ohio State's defensive Denmark last season.

"Seeing the technique he teaches is what a lot of us do naturally," Arnette said of Hafley. "I would have hated myself if I would have left and saw everybody else doing what we're doing now and I was somewhere else. I wanted to be a part of that."

And Hafley does not see an underachiever when he looks at Arnette.

"If I woke up today and just met him and no one ever told me anything about him, I would think you were crazy if you told me there were issues with him," Hafley said recently. "He has done everything that we have asked him to do."

"I think he has a chance to have a really good year. He's made of the right stuff. He's tough. He loves football. He might like football more than most people I have ever been around."

As for Borland, he seemed to be a favorite whipping boy for Buckeye fans fed up with the way the defense was playing last year. He was too slow and needed to give way to the more athletic Buckeyes waiting in the wings, they said. This was the same Tuf Borland, with his apt first name, who was the darling of those same Buckeye fans just one year previous.

Here's what Mike Wachsmann said in his BSB "Facts Man" column after Borland led all tacklers with 11 stops in a 48-3 win over Michigan State in November of 2017, a blowout over a solid Spartan team that came just a week after Iowa had embarrassed the Buckeyes, 55-24.

"Borland, an Illinois native, seems to have that 'it' factor, the same one possessed by A.J. Hawk and James Laurinaitis and other great linebackers of recent vintage," Mike wrote. "He wasn't afraid to put his nose into the action, and he was especially adept at not getting caught up in traffic when the Spartans tried to block at the second level."

I think Mike spoke for most Buckeye fans after that game. Hard-nosed players like Borland don't suddenly become bad players. They do suffer Achilles injuries from time to time and they also are sometimes called on to play in systems that aren't suited for them or their defense.

The fact that his teammates voted Borland a captain for the second year in a row says a lot about him. Keep your eye on the veteran linebacker to see if he is the Tuf of 2017 or the Tuf of 2018.

Finally, I will be watching Brendon White. When the coaches finally called on the hard-hit-

ting safety last season, he left most pundits and Buckeye fans wondering where he had been all season with his big-play ways – another demerit against the former defensive regime.

I don't claim to understand the new "Bullet" position, the supposed hybrid safety/linebacker position that White is scheduled to play. The position doesn't worry me, even though I have yet to see it in action at Ohio State. It's the fact that it may not be an every-down position and the fact that White has been called on to play it that worries me.

I'm from the school that says put your best 22 players on the field. Unless a bunch of players, especially in the back seven, surprise me (which would be a good thing), White is certainly among the best of the defensive 11. I will be closely monitoring how much he is on the field and how others, who are taking up reps that might go to him, are doing.

So how do I sum this all up? Good defense equals good season – new quarterback and coach or not. What does Day think?

"People ask me, 'What if you don't beat the Team Up North? What if you don't win the Big Ten championship or a national championship?'" Day noted. "I always come back with, 'Well, what if I do?'"

If he does, I can live with that!

Comings and Goings

I want to wish the best to staff writer Garrett Stepien, who has gone back east to be closer to his New Jersey home. Garrett made solid contributions to Buckeye Sports Bulletin, especially on our BuckeyeSports.com website, where he helped improve our video coverage.

Joining the BSB team starting this issue are Wyatt Crosher and Patrick Mayhorn. Wyatt comes to us from The Lantern, where he served as assistant sports editor and also held the OSU hockey beat. He recently finished a prestigious internship at The Columbus Dispatch.

Patrick comes to us from the Land-Grant Holy Land website, where he was a feature writer. We hope that his experiences there will add to not just BSB, but to the BuckeyeSports.com website, as well.

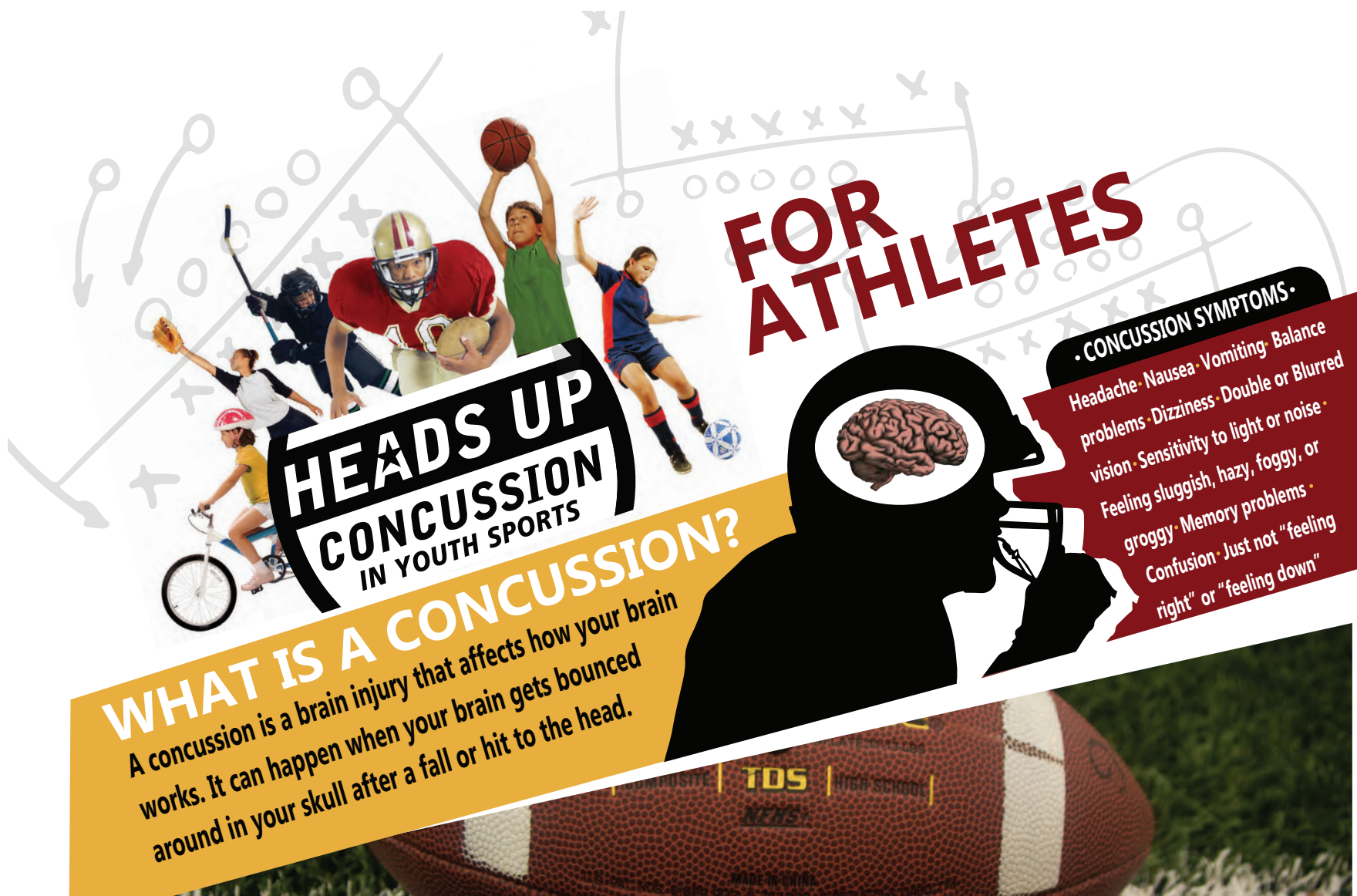
Avoid Mail Problems

This is the time of year when we remind BSB subscribers, especially those out of state, to consider upgrading to first-class mail in an envelope for football season. There is nothing more annoying than receiving your Buckeye Sports Bulletin after the next game has been played. As we tell you each season, the BSB staff and our partners at our printing plant work through the night to make sure your paper goes out on time each week, and we work very hard with postal officials to provide as efficient mail service as possible – sadly in many areas to no avail.

You can upgrade your existing subscription to first-class mail through the Michigan game for just \$28 and through football recruiting season in February for just \$38. Simply send your check or credit card number to BSB at P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212 or call us with your credit card information at (614) 486-2202. Mention either the "Football" upgrade or the "Recruiting" upgrade.

We mailed each out-of-state reader a postcard at the same time we mailed this issue of BSB. Compare when the postcard arrives to when your paper arrives to get a sense of how much your delivery might improve.

Remember, too, that the entire print issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin is posted on each football Monday at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, free to all print subscribers. See page 5 for details or give us a call at the above numbers.



HEADS UP CONCUSSION IN YOUTH SPORTS

FOR ATHLETES

- CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS:**
- Headache
 - Nausea
 - Vomiting
 - Balance problems
 - Dizziness
 - Double or Blurred vision
 - Sensitivity to light or noise
 - Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
 - Memory problems
 - Confusion
 - Just not "feeling right" or "feeling down"

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that affects how your brain works. It can happen when your brain gets bounced around in your skull after a fall or hit to the head.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

REPORT IT. Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. It's up to you to report your symptoms. Your coach and team are relying on you. Plus, you won't play your best if you are not feeling well.

GET CHECKED OUT. If you think you have a concussion, do not return to play on the day of the injury. Only a health care provider can tell if you have a concussion and when it is OK to return to school and play. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play.

GIVE YOUR BRAIN TIME TO HEAL. A concussion can make everyday activities, such as going to school, harder. You may need extra help getting back to your normal activities. Be sure to update your parents and doctor about how you are feeling.

WHY SHOULD I TELL MY COACH & PARENTS ABOUT MY SYMPTOMS?

Playing or practicing with a concussion is dangerous and can lead to a longer recovery.

While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. This can put you at risk for a more serious injury to your brain and can even be fatal.

GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW: IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON

<http://www.healthy.ohio.gov/concussion>

