

## Magical Moment Highlights OSU's Eighth Straight Win Over U-M

By ANDREW LIND  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

For the second weekend in a row, Ohio State sophomore quarterback Justin Fields was down on the turf clutching his knee as athletic trainers rushed to his side.

The Buckeyes were ahead 35-16 in the third quarter when Michigan defensive end Aidan Hutchinson bull-rushed tight end Luke Farrell into Fields, and backup Chris Chugunov was forced to enter the game as Fields limped to the medical tent on the sideline.

Ohio State's medical team quickly got Fields – who revealed after the game that he had suffered a sprained MCL late in the Nov. 23 win over Penn State – outfitted with a bulkier brace than the fabric version he was already wearing and back in the game after just seven plays.

"That was a big topic through the week," Fields said after the 56-27 win over the Wolverines. "I told the trainers that I was just going to try the smaller brace, just to have more mobility. They told me if anything happened in the game, they were going to bring the bigger brace out just in case. That's exactly what happened."

Fields wasn't hampered by the bigger brace, which he compared to those worn by offensive linemen, as he rolled left and threw a 30-yard touchdown pass to freshman wide receiver Garrett Wilson on his first play back.

"I thought it was a magical moment," said head coach Ryan Day. "I thought it was a Heisman moment, for him to go down, take that injury, puts the brace on and then come back out and make a throw that we didn't design that way."

"For him to ad-lib, make that play, make that throw going to his left, that's about as good of a throw as I've seen in a long time. He put it right in the back of the end zone, and that just goes to show you what's inside of him. His heart, his character and his competitive toughness is as good as I've ever been around, and I can't say enough about the way he played today."

"You talk about tough? Wow. I've never been around a tougher quarterback than this guy. He's competitively tough. He's physically tough. Then to come in and make that play like that? That kind



SONNY BROCKWAY

**BOUNCE BACK** – Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields, who sprained his MCL against Penn State, aggravated the injury against Michigan (above). He missed seven plays before returning to action with a bulkier knee brace and throwing a 30-yard touchdown pass on his first play back (below).



ANDREW LIND

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## Buckeye Leaves

Ohio State went into The Big House and earned its eighth straight victory over Michigan by a score of 56-27, and with that came plenty of players deserving of praise. Here are the players whom the Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff, as well as subscribers on the BuckeyeSports.com website, believe are deserving of Buckeye Leaves in Ohio State's 12th win of the season.

**Wyatt Crosher, BSB:** Man, what a year it has been for J.K. Dobbins.

After a season full of questions on whether the running back could get back to the form he displayed during his freshman campaign, the now-junior has proved to be that back and much, much more, and he put it all on display in the best game of his career against Michigan.

Dobbins ran for 211 yards, caught two passes for 49 yards and scored four touchdowns, ending with a career high in scores and total yards from scrimmage.

He was decisive, he was dominant, and he was a key difference maker on the offensive side of the ball all day long, and proved to everyone why his name should be right in the Heisman trophy race.

**Joe Dempsey, BSB:** In the biggest game of the season yet, Justin Fields rose to the occasion against archrival Michigan in Ann Arbor.

The sophomore signal caller went down with an apparent knee injury after getting rolled into by Luke Farrell after throwing a 15-yard completion to Austin Mack. Fields missed seven snaps while the medical staff examined his leg.

Fields re-entered the game on second-and-10 from the Michigan 30-yard line. The Wolverines pressured the young quarterback,

but he escaped the pocket and rolled out to his left. Then Fields delivered a strike to Garrett Wilson in the back of the end zone for a 30-yard touchdown, giving Ohio State a 42-16 lead after the extra point.

Finishing with 302 passing yards and four touchdowns while completing 14 of 25 passes, Fields led the Buckeyes to victory with confidence and composure. He also gained 25 rushing yards on six carries in Ohio State's 56-27 victory.

**Andrew Lind, BSB:** One year ago, Ohio State wide receiver Chris Olave went from relatively unknown freshman to offensive hero of the rivalry game against Michigan. He then added to his legacy in this year's win over the Wolverines, hauling in two catches for 68 yards – including a 57-yard touchdown that put the Buckeyes ahead 14-6 late in the first quarter.

Olave could have added to that total but dropped what would have been a 56-yard score early in the fourth quarter with Ohio State looking to extend a 42-27 lead. But that said, it was a rare moment that doesn't diminish his impact in this great rivalry.

**Patrick Mayhorn BSB:** He may have only played a half, and his final stats may not be gaudy, but linebacker Baron Browning was crucial in Ohio State's 56-27 win over Michigan. After being gashed across the middle in the first half to the tune of 250 yards passing by Michigan quarterback Shea Patterson, the Buckeyes went away from the 4-4 and 4-3 fronts they had used in the first half and toward a much faster and more pass coverage friendly 4-2-5.

To do that, the Buckeyes inserted Browning in the game at middle linebacker in place of Tuf Borland, next to Malik Harrison. In just 30 minutes, Browning made a huge difference, racking up seven tackles, though he was even more important in coverage. Patterson tossed for just 55 yards in the second half, as the Wolverine passing attack was slowed down massively by the shift

to a much faster back seven.

The shift also showed up on the scoreboard. After a 16-point first half that very easily could have been 23, were it not for a fumble in the red zone, Michigan had 11 points in the second half, three of which came off a Garrett Wilson fumble inside of Buckeye territory. The addition of Browning to the defense completely changed the game and allowed the Buckeyes to pull away on the way to an undefeated regular season.

### BSB Subscribers

Justin Fields and J.K. Dobbins were classy, supremely well prepared and confident, executed and dominated the rivals as well as any combination of Buckeyes from the past! We may not see another pair like this for a long time! Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson, the best young receivers in the country, Baron Browning for making tackle after tackle, DaVon Hamilton for increasing pressure and a sack on the Michigan QB and the defensive coaching adjustments after half-time!

– AnthonyBuckeye

You can't ignore Dobbins, wow. Pete Werner deserves a nod and a thanks to Chugunov for holding the fort while Fields took 10. This is a team with all pistons firing.

– PeyoteBuck

Pete Werner and Jordan Fuller. Everyone is talking about the Michigan receivers dropping the balls which killed second half drives. It only takes one big hit for the receivers to start to "feel" the defenders in the middle of the field, and these two guys delivered two bone crunching blows. They weren't dropping balls, they were fearing the coming "hits."

– Borobuckeye



## From The Message Board

**Following Ohio State's 56-27 win over Michigan on Nov. 30, Buckeye Sports Bulletin asked the readers on BuckeyeSports.com, as well as staff members, for their thoughts on Justin Fields' 30-yard touchdown pass in his return from injury, as well as what their favorite all-time Ohio State-Michigan play is.**

**Here are some of the responses:**

"That throw to Wilson for a TD was a moment that will be recalled for the ages. That pass and catch belong in the Louvre."

– PeyoteBuck

"The pass to Wilson that Fields made right off his injury is something I will never forget. That is a pass and story I will tell my kids about one day."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"2016 Curtis Samuel run was insane to watch. Gonzalez catch in 2005 in Ann Arbor."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"1) Anthony Gonzalez catch up there in our comeback win. 2) Luke Fickell intercepting a pass and laying on his back with the ball kicking his legs wildly in a rare win back in those days. Witnessed both of these live."

– mrbigbux

"It's hard to remember all the great plays with 100 years now since the Buckeyes' first victory over Michigan, so I will stick with this year's win. I loved J.K. Dobbins' run on the first drive where he lost the ball, but it bounced right back up to him for a long gain. It set the tone that this was going to be Ohio State's – and Dobbins' – day."

– Poster That Harley Built

"There are so many, but the Will Allen interception in 2002 has to be

up there. That was such a massive moment for the program, not just to clinch a national title berth but to finally beat Michigan with title hopes on the line after falling short every time under John Cooper. That play has always felt like the biggest breath of relief and the end of Ohio State putting so much pressure on itself entering The Game. Carlos Snow opening the second half in 1987 with a 70-yard score to take the lead in Earle Bruce's final game is worth mentioning too, as is Curtis Samuel's game winner in 2016, which still stands as the loudest I've ever heard Ohio Stadium in person."

– Patrick Mayhorn, BSB

"Until this question was asked, I hadn't even considered how that moment and that play by Fields could be remembered as one of the great plays in the history of the rivalry. Time will certainly remember it in the same light that I view Gonzalez's catch, especially if he goes on to win the Heisman and/or Ohio State wins the national championship."

– Andrew Lind, BSB

"There have been so many. Two from my early days on the beat stand out to me, however. My friend Jim Laughlin blocking the punt in the 1979 victory and Vaughn Broadnax's multi-person block to free Art Schlichter for the game-winning TD in 1981. My mind was not cluttered with so many great plays back then, which is why I remember those so well. Oh, and how can I forget Carlos Snow's 70-yard scoring jaunt with a short Tom Tupa pass in 1987, Earle's last game, featuring one of the all-time great jukes? So many."

– Frank Moskowitz, BSB

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# Mistakes Often Tell Tale In The Game

I don't know who first posited the opinion that talent isn't always the great predictor of outcomes. I just know that it's true, especially when it comes to rivalries such as the one everyone refers to simply as The Game.

Ohio State fielded perhaps its most talented team in program history in 1969, but the Buckeyes committed seven turnovers and lost a chance to repeat as national champions with a 24-12 loss to Michigan – an outcome, I might add, on which the Wolverines have been hanging their winged helmets for most of the past 50 years.

The Buckeyes were also the better team – at least that's what the national rankings would have had us believe – against Michigan in 1993 and again in 1996, but OSU pitched four interceptions in the former and Shawn Springs fell down early in the third quarter of the latter, and both games wound up in the loss column for Ohio State.

The '93 and '96 games came smack-dab in the middle of the tenure of one John Harold Cooper, whose 13-year tenure piloting the Buckeyes is the third longest in school history behind Wayne Woodrow Hayes and John Woodworth Wilce. But while Coop's record against all other regular-season opponents was 106-25-3 (an .810 winning percentage), his team always used to make a mistake at the absolute wrong time against Michigan, leading to a 2-10-1 record (.192) in the rivalry game.

I mention this mostly because the tide has so remarkably turned in the Ohio State-Michigan game that there is an entire Midwestern generation growing up that knows nothing but scarlet and gray dominance in the series.

The 115th renewal of The Game featured some tense moments such as when the Wolverines were driving at the end of the first half, and again near the end of the third quarter when the Buckeyes muffed a punt and gave U of M possession at the OSU 26-yard line.

But both of those drives wound up with Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh playing it safe rather than having enough faith in his team to let it try to grab some momentum against a more talented opponent.

In the first case, it was fourth-and-goal at the OSU 5 in the waning seconds of the first half. Michigan had nearly scored a touchdown on the previous play except that receiver Donovan Peoples-Jones couldn't maintain control of a pass from QB Shea Patterson as he went to the ground in the end zone.

So, it wasn't like the Wolverines didn't have a short-yardage play that might have worked. Still, Harbaugh – knowing full well the Buckeyes were getting the ball to start the second half – went with the safe something-is-better-than-nothing call, and the subsequent 23-yard field goal trimmed Michigan's first-half deficit from 15 to 12 points.

Later, after OSU return man Garrett Wilson mishandled a punt in the swirling wind, Harbaugh again elected to kick a field goal with the third-quarter clock winding under three minutes and his team trailing by a 42-16 margin. Yes, it was fourth-and-11 at the Ohio State 27, but with the Buckeyes practically unstoppable on offense all afternoon, going for three points in that situation seemed (excuse the pun) pointless.

Were they mistakes on Harbaugh's part? You can't really define them as such, but those conservative decisions did nothing to help a Michigan team that was outgunned by superior talent on the other side of both lines of scrimmage.

Then, when asked about the decisions after the game, Harbaugh acted with all the indignation of a teenager being quizzed by his parents after he had wrecked the family car. Coach

Khaki said he felt insulted by the question, but imagine how Michigan fans feel after yet another loss to Ohio State.

### Mistake After Mistake

To be fair, Harbaugh's conservatism wasn't directly responsible for his team's loss. Mistakes were.

Michigan immediately put itself behind the eight ball when normally reliable kicker Quinn Nordin missed a PAT following his team's first touchdown, after which the first-half blunders began to pile on top of one another.

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

Strong safety Josh Metellus blew his zone assignment that led to a 57-yard touchdown pass from Justin Fields to Chris Olave to give the Buckeyes a 14-6 lead late in the first quarter, and then Patterson fumbled away a shotgun snap inside the red zone midway through the second period as his team was positioning itself to potentially tie the score. OSU defensive tackle Robert Landers pounced on the loose football, the Buckeyes quickly took things the other way and eventually scored to make it 28-13 with 3:15 remaining until halftime.

During that 84-yard drive, the Wolverines made another, more critical error. Linebacker Khaleke Hudson jumped offside on fourth-and-4, giving the Buckeyes a first down when they were trying to punt the ball away. Two plays later, Ohio State was in the end zone.

There were other mistakes such as Peoples-Jones dropping the potential touchdown pass late in the first half, Hudson missing a tackle on the first play of the second half that resulted in a 41-yard run by J.K. Dobbins, and the fact the Wolverines couldn't down a third-quarter punt at the 1-yard line when the score was still within reach.

At the time, Ohio State was leading by a 35-16 margin, but a lot can happen when you are pinned deep in your own territory. As it was, the ball came out to the 20, the Buckeyes proceeded to march 80 yards in 10 plays, and that made it 42-16 at the 3:46 mark of the third quarter.

The Wolverines showed some life by scoring 11 points within a three-minute span to pull to within 42-27 with 14:23 remaining in the game, but after running back Hassan Haskins was stuffed on a fourth-and-1 out of the Wildcat formation at his own 29 and the Buckeyes turned that short field into a touchdown, the outcome was no longer in doubt.

When the other team is more talented, you have to take advantage of any kind of edge you can find. You have to create turnovers – Ohio State had just one, and that was on the muffed punt – and you can't afford the luxury of playing it safe when you get a sudden change of possession.

Moreover, you cannot afford to make mistake after mistake after mistake and expect to pull off an upset.

### Fun With Numbers

Every Ohio State football fan should stop and take a moment during the next few days to try to fully comprehend the level of greatness their favorite team has been able to achieve against its archrival these last several years.

Not only have the Buckeyes enjoyed an unprecedented streak of eight straight victories against Michigan, the team has now beaten the Wolverines during 15 of the last 16 seasons.

Before the current streak began, OSU's longest winning streak in the series that began in 1897 was four games – 1934 through 1937 and again from 1960 through 1963.

The closest thing to dominance previously enjoyed by Ohio State over Michigan was a decade and a half of games between 1954 and 1968 when the Buckeyes won 11 times in 15 meetings.

But it is not just the string of victories in the series – it is how the victories are being achieved by sheer dominance.

For example, Ohio State accounted for 577 total yards against Michigan in this year's 56-27 victory, the most total yards for the Buckeyes during the 115-game series.

OSU has now topped the 50-point mark against the Wolverines in back-to-back games, and that has never happened before. The Buckeyes had topped 50 points against Michigan in only two of the previous 113 games in the series – 50-20 in 1961 and 50-14 in 1968.

How dominant has Ohio State been offensively during its eight-game winning streak? The passing game gets most of the headlines, but the Buckeyes have had nine players rush for 100 or more yards – and three have gone over 200 – against Michigan over the last eight games.

How many Wolverines have cracked the century mark on the ground against Ohio State during that stretch? Just one, as quarterback Denard Robinson rushed for 122 yards on 10 carries in a 26-21 defeat.

That's still one more than the number of wins by James Joseph Harbaugh against Ohio State as Michigan's head coach. He is now 0-5 against Ohio State, and is the first coach in the history of either program to lose his first five games in the series.

### Some Final Thoughts

Lost amid the euphoria of the victory, the fact that J.K. Dobbins became only the second OSU player in history to eclipse 4,000 in career rushing yards, and Justin Fields likely earning himself a free trip to New York City and the Heisman Trophy presentation ceremony, there was the more-than-slightly bothersome fact that Michigan might have exposed Ohio State's Achilles' heel.

Patterson repeatedly exploited the OSU linebackers during the first half by throwing to his tight ends, a practice that kept Michigan's offense humming during the opening two quarters.

Senior Sean McKeon had two receptions for 51 yards in the first quarter, and he threw the key block against OSU linebacker Pete Werner that sprang freshman speedster Giles Jackson for the game's first touchdown. McKeon later made a leaping grab over Ohio State middle linebacker Baron Browning that set up the touchdown that pulled Michigan to within 15 points early in the fourth quarter. All told, McKeon and fellow senior Nick Eubanks combined for five catches worth 108 yards.

When Ohio State wages war with Wisconsin and perhaps LSU and/or Clemson down the stretch, those kinds of linebacker breakdowns – especially against opposing tight ends in pass coverage – are going to have to be eliminated.

By the way, if you are summarily dismissing Wisconsin in the Big Ten Championship Game because of the 38-7 loss the Buckeyes administered in late October, be aware that Ohio State does not have a very good track record playing teams twice in the same season.

The last time it happened was in 1975 when OSU rolled to a 41-20 win at UCLA during the regular season only to suffer a 23-10 upset loss to the Bruins in the Rose Bowl, a defeat that cost the Buckeyes that season's national championship.



## Day, Buckeyes Embrace Value Of Rivalry

Ohio State has experienced a historic level of dominance over its archrival to the north recently. Since 2001, the Buckeyes are a whopping 17-2 against the Michigan Wolverines, including eight straight victories following a loss in 2011 under interim head coach Luke Fickell. The eighth straight win, a 56-27 romp, set a new high for the longest Buckeyes win streak in the rivalry.

While Ohio State's recent success over Michigan can be attributed to quite a few things, ranging from coaching to talent on the field,

there's one thing that Ohio State's players and staff preach every year prior to kickoff against the Wolverines: the value of the rivalry. Despite a change at head coach, that approach has remained untouched.

"Everything's been the same since I've been here," junior linebacker Tuf Borland said of the approach to the rivalry. "That's been passed down from Coach Meyer to Coach Day and as you can see throughout the facility, you see all the signs and everything. So that's one indication. And then we train for it all year long. Workouts and in spring practice we have a period set aside for The Team Up North, and then going into preseason camp we do as well."

The importance of that preparation is not lost on Ryan Day. Day spoke not just about preparation, but preparation going back to the beginning of the season.

"Again, if you're working on it all year, then you're prepared, whether you've worked on it the spring, the preseason, certain periods that you set aside just to work on The Team Up North," Day said. "You talk to guys all the time about what it means, so they understand coming into the game what to expect. It's always on the schedule that way. We have the countdown in the building. I think everyone understands the importance of it, that's the first thing."

"When you're talking about the game itself, it goes back to the fundamentals: taking care of the football, executing the game plan, giving them a good plan they can execute. Being on the road is

## 2019 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	2019 Record
Aug. 31	FLORIDA ATLANTIC	W, 45-21	FOX	9-3 (7-1 Conference USA)
Sept. 7	CINCINNATI*	W, 42-0	ABC	10-2 (7-1 American Athletic)
Sept. 14	at Indiana	W, 51-10	FOX	8-4 (5-4 Big Ten)
Sept. 21	MIAMI (OHIO)	W, 76-5	BTN	7-5 (6-2 Mid-American)
Sept. 28	at Nebraska	W, 48-7	ABC	5-7 (3-6 Big Ten)
Oct. 5	MICHIGAN STATE*	W, 34-10	ABC/ESPN	6-6 (4-5 Big Ten)
Oct. 18	at Northwestern*	W, 52-3	BTN	3-9 (1-8 Big Ten)
Oct. 26	WISCONSIN*	W, 38-7	FOX	10-2 (7-2 Big Ten)
Nov. 9	MARYLAND	W, 73-14	FOX	3-9 (1-8 Big Ten)
Nov. 16	at Rutgers	W, 56-21	BTN	2-10 (0-9 Big Ten)
Nov. 23	PENN STATE*	W, 28-17	FOX	10-2 (7-2 Big Ten)
Nov. 30	at Michigan*	W, 56-27	FOX	9-3 (6-3 Big Ten)
Dec. 7	Big Ten Championship**	8 p.m.	FOX	

\* 2018 bowl team

\*\* vs. Wisconsin at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)

a little different than being at home. We have to handle that, being loud, the crowd noise. We'll make sure we pipe in the crowd noise during practice, show composure there. It's going to come down to winning the one-on-one battles in the end."

While Day was well-versed in the tradition and importance from the start of his tenure, not everyone on Ohio State's sideline was as aware of what to expect from the annual battle.

"It was the first day I stepped on campus," sophomore wide receiver Chris Olave said, of the first time he realized the magnitude of the rivalry. "I didn't really know how much the rivalry was when I first got here because I'm from the West Coast, but when I first got here, everybody was talking about it. I believe we had a workout that day, and we had to do Team Up North abs, which is like after a workout, we do how many days counting down, that's how many abs we've got to do for that day, and that's when I first heard of the rivalry."

## Smith Was Uncomfortable With Playoff Rankings

When Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith announced that he was stepping down from the College Football Playoff selection committee on Feb. 8, he cited one primary reason: to help new head coach Ryan Day in the transition to replace Urban Meyer.

"Serving on this committee has been an honor," Smith said in a statement from the playoff committee at the time. "Contributing to this great sport is always a privilege, and I will miss the time with my colleagues. It is imperative for me to have 100 percent focus in helping our new coach with his transition at The Ohio State University this fall."

While Smith still holds that his decision was primarily one made to help his new head coach, the athletic director admitted that it wasn't his only reasoning. As Smith explained to The Lantern on Nov. 28, Ohio State's placement in the 2018 playoff played a role in his choice to step down.

"I was also concerned about how the committee was applying the criteria," Smith said. "And so I felt uncomfortable when I came back into the room after I had been recused, and Georgia was ranked ahead of us. They were a two-loss team, not a champion."

While neither Ohio State nor Georgia ultimately made the playoff, with the teams checking in at No. 5 and No. 6 respectively in the final poll, Smith's issues with the process were enough to at least give him pause.

Smith also claimed that he was not upset about Ohio State being listed behind No. 4 Oklahoma, whom many thought the Buckeyes were competing with for the final spot, and that the placement behind Georgia was his only issue with those final rankings.

Because each Power Five conference is required to have at least one sitting athletic director on the committee, Smith was replaced in February by Iowa AD Gary Barta. His issues with the committee have not stopped Smith from work on other projects, including his role as the co-chair of an NCAA group that was designed to

explore the possibility of player compensation. That group released its findings on Oct. 28, stating that athletes could eventually "benefit from the use of their name, image and likeness."

## Pryor Stabbed, Arrested For Assault

Former Ohio State quarterback Terrelle Pryor was hospitalized early Nov. 30 with multiple stab wounds, according to a report from WTAE in Pittsburgh, where Pryor has been living. Pryor was in critical condition upon his arrival, with injuries sustained to his shoulder and chest, and required emergency surgery. That surgery reportedly went well, and Pryor's status was updated to stable condition following the surgery, and his family has said he's expected to survive.

However, Pittsburgh police released a statement shortly after the news of Pryor's injuries broke, stating that Pryor and another suspect were to be charged in connection with an incident on the night of Nov. 29.

"Pittsburgh Bureau of Police officers responded to UPMC Mercy Hospital on November 30 for a male stabbing victim who had arrived there in critical condition by private means just after 4:30 a.m. Upon further investigation by detectives in the Violent Crimes Unit, it was learned the male's injuries were incurred during an earlier dispute inside an apartment on the 200 block of Heinz Street on the city's North Side. During that altercation, a female victim also received injuries.

"After consultation with the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office, police have arrested two people believed to be mutual combatants in this incident. Shalaya Briston, 24, of Munhall, Pa., was arrested and has been charged with Criminal Attempt Homicide and Aggravated Assault. In addition, police have arrested Terrelle Pryor, 30, of Pittsburgh, Pa. He faces a charge of Simple Assault."

Pryor is recovering in the hospital. He has not released a statement on the charges.

## Hafley Reportedly Received Interest From Rutgers

NJ.com reported on Nov. 26 that current Ohio State co-defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley was among the list of coaches that the Scarlet Knights were interested in to replace former Ohio State assistant coach Chris Ash, who was fired on Sept. 29, a day after a 52-0 loss to Michigan. The job with the Scarlet Knights eventually went to another former Buckeye assistant, Greg Schiano (see pages 36-37).

Hafley was one of a few coaches who were named in the report, along with the brother of interim head coach Nunzio Campanile, Anthony, currently the linebackers coach at Michigan, former Wisconsin and Arkansas head coach Bret Bielema and former Tennessee head coach Butch Jones.

In his first year at Ohio State, Hafley has helped to coordinate what may be the nation's best defense, allowing just 11.8 points per game, ranking fourth in the nation. The 40-year-old is familiar with both Schiano and Rutgers. He coached under Schiano in Piscataway in 2011

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From The Pages Of BSB

**35 Years Ago – 1984**

Mike Tomczak made his most ardent supporter, Earle Bruce, proud as he guided the Buckeyes to a 21-6 win over archrival Michigan on Nov. 17 to lock up OSU's first outright Big Ten championship and Rose Bowl berth in five years.

"Mike Tomczak is the greatest comeback story that we've ever had at Ohio State," Bruce proclaimed before a group of reporters after the win.

"On May 5, in the spring game, he broke his leg. On May 31, it didn't look like he was going to be able to make it (for the 1984 season). On Sept. 4, it didn't look like he was going to be able to make it.

"But he stuck in there and goodness gracious sakes. He had the greatest spring I've ever seen a quarterback have at Ohio State. He's been a one-legged guy for a long time. Today, he did a good job for us."

Tomczak completed 11 of 15 passes for 139 yards.

**30 Years Ago – 1989**

It was his ninth loss in 22 games as head football coach at Ohio State, yet his postgame demeanor was unlike that of the previous eight defeats. While not accepting defeat, John Cooper seemed at peace with his team's effort against a No. 3-ranked Michigan team.

Although the underdog Buckeyes dropped a 28-18 decision to the Wolverines and lost a chance for a piece of the Big Ten championship, Cooper had praise for his team.

"We played hard," the second-year OSU head coach said. "We gave it everything we had and made it a good, interesting game. I thought we had our chances to win, especially since we got some turnovers in the game. But let's give Michigan credit. We lost to a great football team today."

**25 Years Ago – 1994**

Cooper had often preached that it would take a team effort if his Buckeyes were to knock off Michigan. On Nov. 19 inside Ohio Stadium, the team finally rose to the challenge and Cooper secured his first victory over the Wolverines as head coach of Ohio State, taking a 22-6 win over Michigan.

Marlon Kerner blocked a field goal and Luke Fickell grabbed an interception, both in the fourth quarter to help seal the win.

"This is the greatest thrill of my life," said OSU quarterback Bobby Hoying, who threw for 125 yards and scored a touchdown in the game. "This is one of the reasons you come to Ohio State. You come here with several goals in mind, and at the top of that list in beating Michigan. The feeling is just indescribable."

**20 Years Ago – 1999**

Cooper might have been happy – except for the fact that he was staring at a season of bitter disappointment. Cooper met with the media just minutes after his Buckeyes ended their season with a 24-17 loss at Michigan Nov. 20.

As the old adage goes, Cooper damned his team with faint praise: He was ecstatic over the way his team played in The Game – the results notwithstanding – but he lamented the fact that his team waited until the final game to show such intensity during a maddening 6-6 season.

"I'm really proud of the effort we gave today," Cooper said. "Unfortunately, we didn't give that kind of effort all season long."

**15 Years Ago – 2004**

Having played as a kickoff returner against Michigan in 2003, Troy Smith knew what it felt like to be a part of what many consider to be college sports' greatest rivalry. But it wasn't until he was hours away from taking the field as the Buckeyes' starting quarterback in the 101st installment of The Game that what he was about to do sank in.

Even the ever-confident Smith himself probably wouldn't have predicted how large a part he would play in his team's eventual 37-21 upset victory over the Wolverines. But looking back on his demeanor in the hours prior to the Nov. 20 kickoff, his 386 yards of total offense were a bit easier to comprehend.

"He had a great demeanor before the game – you could see it in his eyes," said OSU center Nick Mangold. "He gave all of us guys up front a little gift before the game, just to show that he appreciates what we do. That shows what kind of determination and poise he has."

**10 Years Ago – 2009**

Ohio State completed its 2009 regular season Nov. 21 with a 21-10 victory over archrival Michigan, achieving an unprecedented sixth straight win over the Wolverines. The Rose Bowl-bound Buckeyes improved to 10-2 and made it their fifth straight season with double-digit wins, the longest such streak by a Big Ten team in more than a century.

The victory also gave the Buckeyes their third outright Big Ten championship in four seasons.

Asked if he was amazed to be 8-1 against Michigan, head coach Jim Tressel replied, "I don't know. I guess so. We've been blessed with great kids who've fought hard. They really love being a part of this game, and when you love being a part of it,

you have a chance to perform well. We've had some wild games in this series. It's not like it's been easy."

**Five Years Ago – 2014**

One of the most unusual successful seasons in memory took another unexpected turn Nov. 29 for the Ohio State football team.

The Buckeyes beat Michigan 42-28 to improve to 11-1 on the season and finish out a third consecutive 8-0 Big Ten campaign.

The fans still rushed the field, and Buckeyes still exchanged happy embraces among themselves, students and the coaching staff as they left the Ohio Stadium turf. But something was undeniably missing, and it left a major question mark that would have to be answered as the Buckeyes moved into the next phase of the season.

Star quarterback J.T. Barrett was injured on the first play of the fourth quarter, and the Buckeyes had to rely on backup quarterback Cardale Jones to close out what was a 28-21 game at the time. Jones did, but the loss of Barrett put a damper on the win.

"It's kind of a weird feeling," senior tight end Jeff Heurman said after the game. "Senior Day, you beat The Team Up North, going to the Big Ten Championship Game and you feel like something is missing. Your starting quarterback who you rallied around all season is done. You've just got to move forward and get ready for next week."

**One Year Ago – 2018**

Ohio State preached during the week that "legends are made" in The Game. That statement could not have been more true in the case of Chris Olave on Nov. 24 in his first ever game against Michigan.

Olave, who stepped in for Austin Mack in the receiver rotation after Mack was likely lost for the season to an injury in Ohio State's Oct. 20 loss to Purdue, entered the game with just five receptions. He exited the game with just two more, though the two proved to be crucial in Ohio State's 63-39 win. He reeled in a pair of 24-yard touchdown passes from quarterback Dwayne Haskins to help the Buckeyes secure the win.

"I just do it for my teammates and the love for my brothers beside me," Olave said. "And just everything we've been through throughout the season, it's been crazy, so to come out here and contribute to the team is a blessing."

and again the next year in Tampa Bay when Schiano accepted the role as Buccaneers head coach. Originally from New Jersey, Hafley has strong ties to the area and university.

While Hafley would have obviously been allowed to leave for the job (or any job), Ohio State has had a two-year handshake agreement for assistants in recent years, stating that anyone hired should remain in Columbus for at least two seasons before departing. Day shrugged that off back on Oct. 1 but did mention that he expects no turnover this offseason.

"We talk about it when people bring their families here that we'd like them to be here for a long time, and I'd rather not them come here for one year and leave, but guys have opportunities, and I don't want to get in the way of that," Day said. "But at the same time, when you're building relationships and you're recruiting, we expect at least two years, sometimes more."

"The good news is our coaching staff is really

entrenched in this community now, which is great. We love it here, and they're happy. I don't expect anybody to leave anytime soon."

**Ohio State Awards Recap**

Chase Young, Jeff Okudah, Hafley, Justin Fields and J.K. Dobbins all found themselves making the cut on award lists in the days leading up to Ohio State's matchup with Michigan, with each player being named an awards finalist and Hafley being listed among some of the nation's top assistant coaches.

Young leads the way, being named a finalist for two awards, including the Chuck Bednarik Award, which goes to the nation's best defensive player, and the Maxwell Award, awarded to the best player in college football. Young was listed alongside Auburn defensive tackle Derrick Brown and Clemson linebacker Isaiah Simmons for the former, while joining LSU quarterback

Joe Burrow and Oklahoma quarterback Jalen Hurts on the latter.

Young would be the first Buckeye to win the Bednarik Award since its inception in 1995, when it was awarded to Northwestern linebacker and current Wildcat head coach Pat Fitzgerald.

Buckeyes have won the Maxwell four times, the first in 1955 by Howard "Hopalong" Cassady, followed by Bob Ferguson in 1961, Archie Griffin in 1975 and, most recently, Eddie George in 1995.

Continued On Page 6



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# OHIO STATE INSIDER

Continued From Page 5

A potential candidate to head to New York for the Heisman ceremony as well, Young has shattered records in just 10 games this season, racking up 16½ sacks, a new single-season school record.

Joining Young on the list of Buckeye defenders named award finalists is Okudah, who was selected as one of the last three players in the running for the Jim Thorpe Award, given to the best defensive back. Okudah is joined by LSU's Grant Delpit and Georgia's J.R. Reed. Since its creation in 1986, two Buckeyes have been selected as Thorpe Award winners: Antoine Winfield in 1998 and Malcolm Jenkins in 2008. Okudah has 26 tackles and three interceptions on the season.

Hafley was included as one of the 15 semifinalists for the Broyles Award, given to the nation's best assistant coach. Hafley is one of five Big Ten representatives, along with Indiana offensive coordinator Kalen DeBoer, Michigan defensive coordinator Don Brown, Minnesota offensive coordinator Kirk Ciarrocca and Wisconsin DC Jim Leonhard.

Two Buckeye coaches have won the award, both in the last 15 years. The first was defensive

coordinator Jim Heacock in 2007, while the second was current Texas head coach and former Buckeye offensive coordinator Tom Herman in 2014. Current co-offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson won it in 2008 as an assistant at Indiana.

On the offensive side of the ball, Fields was named with Burrow and Hurts as a Davey O'Brien Award finalist for the nation's best quarterback. Troy Smith is the lone Ohio State winner, back in 2006. Fields has put up strong numbers in his first season in Columbus, picking up 2,654 yards and 37 touchdowns on 189-of-277 passing while tossing just one interception.

Lastly, Dobbins was named a Doak Walker Award finalist, with Oklahoma State's Chuba Hubbard and Wisconsin's Jonathan Taylor. The Walker goes to the best running back and has been given to a Buckeye back just once, in 1995 to George. Dobbins has 250 carries, 1,657 yards and 19 touchdowns on the season.

### Buckeyes Close Regular Season At No. 2 In Polls

Ohio State may have blown out archrival Michigan, but the win over a then top-15 team still wasn't enough for the Buckeyes to jump over LSU, who sat atop both the AP and coaches polls for the fourth straight week unanimously, and the fifth straight in the eyes of the AP voters.

Ohio State is ahead of Clemson, Georgia, Utah, Oklahoma, Florida, Baylor, Alabama and Wisconsin in the top 10 of both polls.

There are six total Big Ten teams in both polls, led by the Buckeyes and Badgers, who will square off in the Big Ten Championship Game on Dec. 7. Following Wisconsin is Penn State at No. 12 in the AP poll and No. 11 in the coaches poll, No. 15 Minnesota, Michigan at No. 17 in the AP poll and No. 18 in the coaches and Iowa, one spot behind the Wolverines in both polls.

Despite its loss to Memphis, Cincinnati remained in both polls at No. 21, meaning that the Buckeyes now have four ranked wins on the season over Wisconsin, Penn State, Michigan and Cincinnati, with a fifth up for grabs in the rematch with the Badgers.

## Next BSB Print Mails Week Of Dec. 21

This is the final Buckeye Sports Bulletin print issue until the big Bowl Preview issue scheduled to be mailed the week of Dec. 21. Primary coverage of Ohio State's Big Ten Championship Game with Wisconsin will be on the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB print subscribers. We will be posting any news from Ryan Day's weekly press conference, in addition to other availabilities leading up to that game, on the site. We will also have our popular Staff Predictions on game day with the Badgers and any news about Ohio State's Playoff or bowl destination.

In another print/online publishing note, please remember that due to BSB's print publishing schedule, football's early recruiting signing period, starting Dec. 18, will be covered online at BuckeyeSports.com as well, so those readers who are not already enjoying this feature may want to get signed up and comfortable with the site now.

The BuckeyeSports.com website is available 24/7/365 with all the breaking news posted. Also enjoy Reprint Thursdays, with stories from the BSB archives, and discuss the Ohio State sports topics of the day with other readers and staff members on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum. Subscribers can also read the entire print issue of each BSB before it has even hit the post office.

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If you have any questions about BuckeyeSports.com or your mail service, feel free to call us at the above number.

### Buckeyes Atop CFP Poll

Ohio State found itself at the top of the Nov. 26 College Football Playoff committee poll after a 28-17 win over Penn State the weekend prior. The Buckeyes had been behind LSU in each of the previous polls, but the victory over the Nittany Lions, paired with a 56-20 win for LSU over Arkansas, was enough for the Buckeyes to leap into the top spot.

Committee chair Rob Mullens explained the decision briefly: "Ohio State has been a complete team all year, and their win against Penn State impressed the committee."

He went on to elaborate slightly on what a complete team looks like in the eyes of the committee, noting, "Competing consistently and really highly ranked on offense and defense, performing at a high level in both."

The Buckeyes were joined in the poll by five other Big Ten teams, including two more in the

top 10, with Minnesota at No. 8 and Penn State at No. 10. Wisconsin was listed as No. 12, Michigan at No. 13 and Iowa back at No. 17.

LSU, Clemson, Georgia, Alabama, Utah, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Baylor and Penn State closed out the top 10.

### Primary Coverage From Indy Will Be Online

Due to Buckeye Sports Bulletin's print publishing schedule, our primary coverage of the Big Ten Championship Game will be online at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com. This will include coverage leading up to the game, as well as coverage of the game itself.

If you are not already taking advantage of BuckeyeSports.com, a free service to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers, see the simple sign-up instructions on page 6 of this issue or give us a call at (614) 486-2202 and we will walk you through the process.

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# Championships Priority For Quarterback Fields

Continued From Page 1

of throw? That was one of the best throws I've seen in a long time. In that spot, after taking that hit, after just putting a brace on? I don't even know what to say."

Fields admitted after the game that he underwent treatment during the week on

his knee in order to be healthy enough to play against the Wolverines, and he showed his resiliency by completing 14 of 25 passes for 302 yards and four touchdowns in the win.

That included a 16-yard strike to senior Austin Mack in the fourth quarter, which put him over the 300-yard mark for the

second time this season. Fields also added 25 yards on six carries, though he did not have a rushing attempt after the injury scare.

"That was awesome," fifth-year senior Jonah Jackson said of Fields' second-half effort, "just to see his toughness and perseverance in the game and his ability to

come back in and do what he did."

Junior defensive end Chase Young, who also finds himself in the thick of the Heisman Trophy race, echoed those sentiments.

"I feel like he's the best quarterback in the country, and I think he just put on that show today," Young said. "I love Justin,



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and he's definitely leading us right now."

With his performance, Fields may have cemented his status as Ohio State's best chance to win the Heisman Trophy – though former Buckeye and current LSU quarterback Joe Burrow remains the heavy favorite entering championship weekend on Dec. 7. And while he said he's honored to be in the conversation, it's clear Fields is simply focused on winning a national championship rather than the individual accolades that may come with playing for the No. 1 team in the country.

"I give all the credit to God," Fields said. "Without him, I'd be nothing. The hard work the whole team puts in during the week, and I think it just pays off in the weight room, in the training room, off the field, just all that combined just goes into the game."

**Dobbins' Career Day**

Ohio State junior running back J.K. Dobbins finished the game with a career-high 211 yards and four touchdowns, surpassing his previous highs of 203 yards in the 2018 win over Maryland.

"I know he was sick to his stomach about the fumble (against Penn State) and he wore that on his sleeve all week," Day said after the game, referring to Dobbins' third-quarter fumble that led to a touchdown for the Nittany Lions. "He just had a look in his eye today. He was not going to be denied."

Dobbins – a native of La Grange, Texas – actually fumbled his first carry of this game, too, but the ball bounced back into his arms and he picked up 34 yards on the run play. He accounted for 79 yards on the drive, including a 5-yard plunge for Ohio State's first points of the game.

When Michigan closed the gap to 14-13, Dobbins added a pair of second-quarter scores to give the Buckeyes a comfortable lead heading into the half.

"It was great," Dobbins said after the game. "Big rivalry game. Without my offensive line, I couldn't do it. I just want to keep going, keep getting better."

Dobbins – who also added two receptions for 49 yards – capped things off with a 33-yard touchdown scamper in the fourth quarter, the final scoring play for either team.

In the win, Dobbins became only the second running back in program history (Archie Griffin, 1972-75) to amass 4,000 rushing yards in his career, having rushed for 1,403 yards as a freshman, 1,053 as a sophomore and 1,657 yards – and counting – during his junior year. That's why he, in addition to Fields and Young, has garnered Heisman consideration this fall.

"All three of them played great today," Day said. "All three of them deserve to be in New York, and I'll let everybody make the decision on who they think (should win). But Justin Fields, the way he played today was unbelievable, the way that J.K. ran, and how talented and dominant Chase is, all three of them deserve a trip to New York, in my opinion."

Dobbins – who on Nov. 25 was named a finalist for the Doak Walker Award alongside Oklahoma State's Chuba Hubbard and Wisconsin's Jonathan Taylor – feels he still has room to improve, though.

"I'm not satisfied," he said. "I'm not even close to being satisfied."



ANDREW LIND

**UP A RUNG** – With his career-high 211 yards against Michigan, junior running back J.K. Dobbins is now second on Ohio State's all-time rush list.



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# OSU Offense Scorches Stout Michigan Defense

Michigan entered The Game boasting the nation's No. 4 pass defense, surrendering just 161.1 yards per game, and the No. 13 rush defense at 105.9 yards per contest. Ohio State's high-octane offense obliterated those marks on the way to a convincing 56-27 victory in the Big House on Nov. 30.

## GAME NOTEBOOK

### Joe Dempsey

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day has a lot of respect for the Maize and Blue, but he knew that his team couldn't shy away from what it does best against a tough opponent.

"Their defensive staff does an excellent job, but you have to be aggressive against them," Day said. "You have to set the tone. And when it's the other way around, then you're battling uphill. They have really good players and a really good scheme, but you just have to stay aggressive and you've got to keep your foot on the pedal."

"The only way that works is if the kids make plays. It sounds good until you're not making plays, but these guys made plays."

The Ryan Day-led Buckeyes nearly exceeded Michigan's season average of 16.3 points allowed per game by 40 while amassing 577 yards against a defense that entered The Game giving up only 267.0 per contest.

Junior running back J.K. Dobbins set the tone for the Buckeyes in the running game behind a dominant performance from the Ohio State offensive line. The co-captain from La Grange, Texas, gained 211 yards and four touchdowns on 31 carries for an impressive 6.8 yards-per-carry average. Master Teague added 29 yards on 12 attempts, and quarterback Justin Fields gained 25 more on six tries, giving Ohio State 264 rushing yards on the day.

The Scarlet and Gray dominated the Wolverines up front, controlling the line of scrimmage and opening up holes for Dobbins. Fifth-year senior left guard Jonah Jackson helped lead the Ohio State offensive line to a dominant performance, crediting the tenacity of the big men up front in a pivotal matchup with archrival Michigan.

"Every game we come in with a look in our eyes to just dominate, be fierce, be nasty," Jackson said. "But this game is extra special because you prepared so long for it."

While the Wolverines had been sound against the run through 11 games, they were even better against the pass, shutting down nearly every offense they had faced.

Fields and Co. had their way with the Maize and Blue secondary, averaging a sparkling 20.9 yards per catch. It wasn't always pretty for Fields, but the sophomore transfer from Georgia overcame a few early misses in a big way. Fields finished with 302 passing yards and four touchdowns on 14-of-25 passing, giving him a 210.3 passer rating.

In addition to the outstanding passing stats of Fields, the first-year starter showed supreme toughness when needed. Day was very proud

of his playmakers' abilities, which were on full display in Ann Arbor.

"They are a very talented defense, and a lot of people have a hard time moving the ball against them," Day said of the Wolverines defense. "But at the end of the day, a game like this comes down to players, not plays. And these guys, they willed themselves to make plays."

### Cooper Comes Back For TTUN

Columbus-area native Jonathon Cooper knew he had one more game to play this season before hitting the four-game maximum for maintaining redshirt eligibility.

It was theorized Ohio State might save Cooper for the Big Ten Championship Game or the College Football Playoff, but the senior defensive end felt a special connection to playing in The Game with his teammates.

"I feel like this game would mean more to me and my brothers, to end the regular season undefeated. I wanted to make sure that I gave everything that I've got," Cooper said. "Not only is this the rivalry game, I feel like it's the last time I really get to play emotionally with my brothers when it means something. And I was feeling really good this week. I had a pretty good practice, and I asked the coaches if I could do this one."

The decision to play against the Wolverines was not easy for the Gahanna Lincoln product, but it was one he was glad he made.

"It was tough because obviously I was debating if I wanted to come back against Penn State, Team Up North or Big Ten championship, one of those," Cooper said. "I felt something inside of me that said this should be the one, and I'm

very happy that I made that decision."

Cooper played well in The Game, recording three solo tackles, including one sack.

With Ohio State leading 35-16 in the third quarter, the Wolverines faced second-and-10 from their own 48-yard line. Michigan quarterback Shea Patterson dropped back to pass with U-M still holding onto hope, but Cooper engulfed Patterson for a 6-yard loss. Patterson threw an incomplete pass on third-and-16, and Michigan punted both the ball and its hope for a comeback away.

"This season has been very tough, very hard," Cooper said. "But I honestly wasn't going into this game thinking, 'Oh, I want to make this big-time play or big-time sack.' Every single week, whether I'm playing or not, I want to make sure that I give everything to this team, everything that I have, whether that's on the field or off the field."

"And I'm happy that I made that play. It means the world to me that my teammates were here and I stepped up for them."

### Defense Struggles In Wade's Void

Ohio State sophomore cornerback Shaun Wade warmed up in full pads with his teammates but was held out of the showdown with archrival Michigan.

Wade, who lines up at slot corner, safety, outside corner and sometimes even linebacker for the Buckeyes, is one of the most valuable players on the team.

His immense impact was felt in his absence against the Wolverines, as they were able to pick apart the Ohio State secondary in the first half.



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# Game Analysis

Fifth-year defensive tackle Robert "B.B." Landers attributed the slip-ups to the fact that Michigan saved some new wrinkles in its offense for The Game.

"I think the biggest thing was we had to settle down," Landers said. "There were a few things that they did that we just hadn't seen on film, which has kind of been the trend all season."

Junior cornerback Amir Riep and sophomore corners Sevyn Banks and Cameron Brown struggled at times in relief, particularly in the first half. The trio of reserves had to play even more snaps once fifth-year corner Damon Arnette went down with an undisclosed injury.

Not only is Wade sound in coverage, but he is one of the Buckeyes' biggest playmakers on either side of the ball. With a knack for forcing turnovers, Wade has four interceptions and two forced fumbles in his career.

Although they allowed the most passing yards they had all year, the Ohio State defensive backs did come away with one turnover. Riep picked off a Patterson pass in impressive fashion, snagging the ball out of the air with one hand and running it back 16 yards in the fourth quarter.

Part of the problem with Wade's absence from the Ohio State defense came in the form of miscommunication. Wade has an exceptional football IQ, and the Buckeye secondary has communicated coverages and audibles well all season. Without Wade, however, several miscues in the secondary led to easy yardage and even points for the Wolverines.

Despite several errors, Day was pleased with how some of the less-experienced players rose to the occasion.

"They've got some really good receivers, Patterson's really talented, their offensive line did a good job protecting, I thought," Day said. "But I thought at halftime our defensive staff made some really good adjustments.

"(Patterson) was 4 of 24 in the second half – we held him to that. That's a really good passing offense and some of the best receivers in the country, so hats off to our defensive staff.

"But the guys on defense played – Jeff Okudah played. Amir Riep stepped up in a big spot. Marcus Hooker was out there, Sevyn Banks was playing, Cam (Brown) – those guys were involved with it and those guys did a great job."

Landers agreed with his first-year head coach that the team's ability to recognize what was going wrong and then correct any weaknesses was the biggest reason for its eighth

## What Worked Well

The Ohio State offensive line controlled the line of scrimmage against a formidable Michigan defensive front, and in turn, the Buckeyes controlled the game. Head coach and play caller Ryan Day made it clear that Ohio State wanted to set the tone in the ground game, and the offense did just that.

The Buckeyes gained 118 rushing yards in the first half alone, with junior running back J.K. Dobbins running for 103 yards and three first-half scores. Dobbins finished with 211 of the team's 264 rushing yards, hitting holes with authority and wearing down the Wolverines with his physical running style.

The Ohio State offensive line also excelled in pass protection, giving sophomore quarterback Justin Fields enough time to throw for 302 yards and four touchdowns, with many deep completions requiring extensive blocking.

Fields was sacked only once, and the offensive line did not give the Wolverines any reason to think they could hang with the likes of Ohio State. The Buckeye offense scored 56 points and totaled 577 yards while doing whatever it wanted against a tough Michigan defense.

## What Didn't Work

The Ohio State defense has defended well against the pass all season, but the Buckeyes struggled in the absence of sophomore cornerback Shaun Wade. Michigan quarterback Shea Patterson threw for 305 yards with one touchdown and one interception, gaining the most aerial yards against Ohio State all season.

The Ole Miss transfer was able to get into a rhythm against the shorthanded Scarlet and Gray early, completing 14 of 19 passes for 250

yards and his lone touchdown in the first half. The most passing yards allowed by the Buckeyes before facing Michigan was 218 against Michigan State on Oct. 5.

In addition to Wade's absence, fifth-year senior cornerback Damon Arnette suffered an undisclosed injury during the game. Junior cornerback Amir Riep and sophomore corners Sevyn Banks and Cameron Brown were forced into expanded roles, struggling at times with communication.

The breakdowns in the Buckeye secondary allowed for a few easy first downs for Patterson and Michigan's passing attack, which finished with 305 yards and one touchdown through the air.

## Play Of The Game

After missing seven snaps due to a knee injury, Fields returned to the field with a bulky brace on his left knee. The Buckeyes faced second-and-10 from the Michigan 30-yard line with a 35-16 lead and just under four minutes left in the third quarter.

Michigan brought pressure against the hobbled sophomore signal caller, but he avoided the rush and rolled out to his left. Fields saw freshman wide receiver Garrett Wilson racing toward the end zone, but the dual-threat quarterback had to make sure he threw the ball hard enough to beat Michigan safety Josh Metellus.

Fields flipped his hips and heaved a beautiful pass to the back of the end zone, where Wilson had beaten Metellus. The freshman receiver snagged the ball and kept his feet in bounds for an Ohio State touchdown, giving the visitors a 42-16 lead and helping propel them to a victory in their rival's house.

– Joe Dempsey

straight victory against Michigan.

"It just came down to us making the proper in-game adjustments and halftime adjustments," Landers said. "Once we made those adjustments and got to settle, and got a little more comfortable with the reads and what we were seeing, it then allowed us to play a lot faster. It's one of those things where we knew we were going to be tested physically, but the biggest thing was going to be mentally."

## Wilson's First Rivalry Game

Freshman wide receiver Garrett Wilson got his first taste of The Game and carved his name in the storied history of the rivalry.

The five-star freshman who grew up near Columbus led both teams in receiving yards with 118 on three catches, with one serving as the play of the game.

Wilson hauled in a 30-yard touchdown from a hobbled Fields on a second-and-10 in the third quarter, pushing the Ohio State lead to

42-16 with the ensuing extra point. The talented wideout from Austin (Texas) Lake Travis beat Michigan safety Josh Metellus and reeled in the score in the back of the end zone.

Sophomore wideout Chris Olave, who caught two touchdowns as a true freshman against Michigan in 2018, gave high praise to Wilson

following his best performance of the season.

"That was a definitely a big touchdown," Olave said of Wilson's score. "I keep saying these past couple weeks, Garrett is the most talented receiver we've got, with his limited role this year. He had a big game today, and I'm proud of him."



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# Buckeyes Win Eighth Straight Vs. Wolverines

By CRAIG MERZ  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Sophomore quarterback Justin Fields had his Heisman Trophy moment and junior back J.K. Dobbins his Heisman game when they combined for all eight touchdowns as top-ranked Ohio State pounded No. 13 Michigan 56-27 at Michigan Stadium in Ann Arbor on Nov. 30.

Fields overcame a knee injury to throw for 302 yards and four touchdowns, and Dobbins rushed for 211 yards and four TDs (both career highs) as the Buckeyes continued their dominance in the series to the delight of the OSU fans among the 112,071 in attendance.

The Buckeyes (12-0, 9-0) led 28-16 at the half and pulled away for their eighth straight win in the series and 15th in 16 games, dropping U-M coach Jim Harbaugh to 0-5 while Ryan Day won his first game in the storied rivalry.

Fields was 14 of 25 and ran six times for 25 yards. Dobbins carried the ball 31 times and added two receptions for 49 yards.

Freshman Garrett Wilson had three catches for 118 yards and a TD but fumbled a punt in the third quarter that set up a field goal for the Wolverines (9-3, 6-3).

Senior Austin Mack had 39 yards and a score on three catches, sophomore Chris Olave had 68 receiving yards and a score via two grabs, and senior K.J. Hill had two receptions for 17 yards and a TD.

U-M's Shea Patterson was 18 of 43 for 305 yards, a TD, an interception and a fumble. However, he was 4 of 24 for 55 yards and the

interception in the second half.

## First-Half Blitz

Michigan wasted little time, 3:17 to be exact, to assert itself on the game's opening drive by going 75 yards on seven plays for a 6-0 lead at 11:43 after Quinn Nordin missed the extra point.

Facing third-and-5 from the Michigan 48, Patterson scrambled to toss a 7-yard pass to Ronnie Bell, and a personal foul on OSU junior cornerback Jeff Okudah for a late hit moved the ball to the Ohio State 30. Nick Eubanks took a pass for 8 yards, and Giles Jackson raced in from 22 yards on a reverse.

The Buckeyes countered with a 75-yard drive of their own with the made PAT by junior Blake Haubeil at the 8:50 mark for a 7-6 lead. The nine-play, 2:53 series featured a fortuitous bounce and a big third-down conversion.

After Fields threw incomplete to Olave on the first play from scrimmage, Dobbins broke through the line. He fumbled the ball, but it popped back to him in stride for a 34-yard gain to the U-M 41.

He had two runs for 12 to the 29 before Fields was sacked at the 33. On second down, Fields was off target again. Needing 14 yards on third down, Fields found Dobbins across the middle for a 28-yard advance to the 5, and Dobbins ran in from there on the ensuing play, the last of his 51 yards rushing for the drive.

Olave, who had two TD catches and a blocked punt in the 62-39 win last season over U-M, made it 14-6 with 1:27 to go in the first when he caught a perfectly thrown 57-yard pass from Fields for his 11th touchdown reception.

During the six-play, 81-yard, 2:27 drive,



SONNY BROCKWAY

**FRESHMAN FEAST – Wide receiver Garrett Wilson hauled in three catches for 118 yards and a touchdown in his first game against Michigan.**

Olave had an 11-yard reception before Dobbins carried twice for 11 yards to the OSU 43 to set up the scoring strike.

U-M responded in rapid fashion, needing three plays to go 75 yards in 1:08 to make it

14-13 with 19 seconds left in the first quarter. Hassan Haskins had a catch for 9, Sean McKeon beat blown coverage for 41 to the 25, and on the next play Donovan People-Jones was free for the scoring pass.

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## OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN

The Buckeyes started their next possession after the touchback at their 25. Fields converted a third-and-1 with a sneak to the 37. Dobbins picked up 4 yards, and 15 more were tacked on when Carlo Kemp was flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct when he untied Dobbins' shoe and took it off.

Three plays later with the ball on the OSU 47, Fields had a simple crossing pass at the line to Wilson, who sped 41 yards to the 12. Dobbins gained 2, tight end Jeremy Ruckert made a 4-yard catch at the left sideline, and Dobbins rushed for a 6-yard TD to extend the lead to 21-13 at the 10:12 mark. The drive used 5:07 and nine plays.

The Wolverines surged from their 22 thanks to a pair of long pass plays – 34 yards to Eubanks and 16 to Bell – to set up a third-and-9 from the 12. Patterson fumbled the snap, and senior defensive end Robert Landers recovered it at the 16.

From there, Michigan made another egregious mistake that led to the Buckeyes going up 28-13 with 3:15 remaining before the half. The Buckeyes were 4 yards shy of a first down at their 43. OSU went to punt, but the Wolverines jumped offside to give OSU new life at its 48.

Wilson made the Wolverines pay with a 47-yard catch to the 5, and Dobbins took the handoff on the next play to complete the 84-yard, nine-play, 3:17 drive.

The Wolverines continued to exploit the pass coverage but had to settle for a 23-yard field goal by Nordin with 19 seconds left before the half to make it 28-16.

Patterson on the 70-yard, nine-play, 2:56 drive had completions of 24 to Peoples-Jones, 17 to Bell and 21 to Nico Collins, the latter giving U-M a first at the 5. After an incompletion,

Jackson gained nothing, and on third down senior safety Jordan Fuller had a pass breakup in the end zone on a pass Peoples-Jones let slip away from him.

Dobbins had 103 yards on 17 carries by halftime, and Fields was 8 of 16 for 200 yards with Wilson accounting for 88 on two catches. Patterson was 14 of 19 for 250 yards.

### Second Half To Remember

The Buckeyes got the ball to start the third quarter, and they continued their onslaught. Dobbins on the first play ran 41 yards from the 25 to the U-M 34. He had a 21-yard catch to the 13 and a run for three more.

Fields then took off for the right sideline on the next play. He was hit well out of bounds by Cam McGrone for a personal foul. Added with a holding call, the ball was placed on the 2. Dobbins had consecutive runs for minus-4 yards to the 6.

After a U-M timeout, Fields found Hill for a TD, the 46th straight game in which Hill had a catch, and the score was 35-16 at 11:18. OSU traveled 75 yards in 3:42 on six plays.

After a Michigan punt, the Buckeyes started at their 20. Fields ran 9 to the 29. He then passed 15 yards to Mack to the OSU 44.

That's when Fields got hurt with 7:39 left in the quarter when junior tight end Luke Farrell was pushed back and rolled on Fields' knee.

Chris Chugunov replaced Fields and had two handoffs to second-year freshman Master Teague for gains of a combined 5 yards to the 49. On third-and-5, Chugunov threw a rope to Hill for 11 yards to the U-M 40 to keep the drive alive.

Teague went for 10 yards and a first on three carries. After a Chugunov incomplete pass to

Wilson, Fields re-entered and on his first play was forced out of the pocket.

That's when his legendary moment was born. Hobbled a bit by a knee brace, he rolled left and threw a pinpoint pass to Wilson for a 30-yard TD with 3:46 left in the third to extend the lead to 42-16. The series was 10 plays, 80 yards and 4:42.

The Wolverines made it 42-19 after Wilson's second muffed punt of the season at the OSU 26. The Wolverines lost a yard on three plays (including two incomplete passes) and Nordin made a 45-yard field goal at 2:33 of the third.

Michigan then got a three-and-out and started from its 40 after a 31-yard punt by junior Drue Chrisman. U-M made quick work to pull to within a pair of scores 42-27 at 14:23 of the fourth quarter. Haskins was the workhorse. He opened the series with a 33-yard run and added another for 9 to the OSU 18. Patterson moved the chains with a 1-yard gain to the 17 to end the third quarter.

After an incompletion, McKeon had a catch of 15 to the 2, before Haskins rushed for the score. Michigan's first attempt at two points was an incomplete pass, but sophomore corner Cam Brown was called for holding and Haskins converted at the end of the end of the seven-play, 60-yard drive in 1:39.

On the next possession, the Buckeyes faced a third-and-1 at their own 44, but a false start and an incompletion to junior Demario McCall gave the ball back to Michigan at its 20 after Chrisman's 61-yard punt went for a touchback.

The Buckeyes' defense came up with a big play to stop Michigan on downs in its own territory. On fourth-and-1 from the 29, Haskins was dropped for a 1-yard loss by Landers and a host of others with 12:17 left in the game.

Four plays later, OSU got an insurance score to increase the lead to 49-27 with 10:11 left. Dobbins lost 2, and Farrell had a 14-yard catch for a first down at the 16. Dobbins was stopped for no gain, but Fields connected with Mack in the middle of the field and he did the rest.

Michigan failed on another fourth-down try with 8:48 to go, giving the Buckeyes the ball at the U-M 47 after Patterson's incompletion. Three plays earlier, Fuller had been penalized for targeting, but after a review, the call was reversed.

From there it was all Dobbins, all the time to make it 56-27 with 6:30 left. He ran all four plays for 47 yards, capped by a 33-yard run to the right pylon.

On U-M's next drive, junior corner Amir Riep intercepted Patterson at the OSU 34 and returned it 16 yards to the 50 with 5:18 left.

Fields and Dobbins gave way to Chugunov and Teague at that point. OSU and U-M exchanged punts, and the Buckeyes got the ball one final time with 2:20 left before Teague ran four times with the game ending at the Buckeye 46.

### Numbers

Dobbins passed Ezekiel Elliott (3,961 yards) for second on the all-time OSU rushing list. He has 4,113 yards to trail only Archie Griffin, (5,589 in four seasons). ... OSU had 577 total yards (313 passing, 264 rushing). Michigan had 396 (305 passing, 91 rushing). ... The Buckeyes were 9 of 15 on third down; the Wolverines 2 of 13. ... Junior linebacker Baron Browning led the Buckeyes with seven tackles (six solo). ... Junior defensive end and Heisman hopeful Chase Young had no tackles for the Buckeyes. He was credited with two quarterback hurries.

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# BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 56, Michigan 27

**Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on how the pressure of winning his first game against Michigan as a head coach lasted all season long:** "Ever since I took the job, it's been on my mind. I know what this game means to the people of Ohio, to Buckeye Nation, and coming off the heels of one of the greatest coaches in the history of college football who went 7-0 here, those are big shoes to fill. And I tried not to worry about that, our staff tried not to worry about that. All you worry about is just right now. And anytime I started to think about, 'What if? What if?' I just got right back into my work and just focused on trying to put a good game plan together."

**Day on the emotions that go into his first head coaching victory against the rival Wolverines:** "This is all a blur right now. To say that there's not stress coming into a game like this would be a lie. There's so much riding on a game like this, and you understand, and you feel the weight of everybody involved with it. To win like this, it's a relief."

**Day on the relief and the feelings he has about Ohio State's performance, and what all that means to both him and his loved ones:** "I am just overcome with emotion right now. There's just so much that goes into this game. We live it year-round. For our guys to play the way that they did, it means everything to our program, to my family – Nina and the kids. You have no idea. It just feels good."

**Ohio State sophomore quarterback Justin Fields on why the Buckeyes currently have an edge over Michigan in the rivalry:** "I just think we take it more seriously than they do. We prepare for it all year. Like (football sport performance) Coach Mick (Marotti) said, we're preparing for the next year right now. So, I think it just means more at Ohio State."

**Ohio State junior defensive end Chase Young on what he was thinking when Fields was hurt because of the toughness of the sophomore quarterback:** "After he said he was cool, I knew he was going to go back in the game. You wouldn't have thought that he wasn't, just because I know the type of player that he is."

**Young on his underwhelming performance against Michigan, after finishing without a sack in a game for the first time all season due to multiple double teams:** "I played as hard as I could. I put my best on the field, and at the game, (if) you put your best on the field, you can't really be mad."

**Ohio State fifth-year senior defensive tackle Robert Landers on what adjustments the defense needed to do to at halftime to slow down Michigan's strong start to the game:** "Sometimes you have to be a student and a player as you play at the same time. You have to know what's going on in the game to be able to communicate what you're getting, what you're seeing to the coaches so that we all as a collection can make the proper adjustments for everybody from top to bottom. So I give kudos to the defense as a whole for mentally being locked in, also physically, and being able to make those adjustments for us to excel toward the second half."

**Landers on the key to making an Ohio State victory happen in such a pivotal rivalry game:** "In a game like this, you have to step up. In a game like this, you have to come together. When adversity strikes, you have to grab each other's hand and you have to go to work."

**Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh when asked to compare the talent gap, or coaching gap, between Michigan and Ohio State following the previous two losses by 23-plus points:** "I'll answer your questions, not your insults. (Ohio State) played really good. They played better today."

**Harbaugh on how the game slipped away in the head coach's fifth defeat to Ohio State:** "I thought our team was well prepared. I thought they were playing good football. I thought it was a good football fight. It got away from us today. Give them credit for playing well."

**Michigan senior tight end Sean McKeon on what made the difference in the Ohio State-Michigan game that resulted in the Buckeyes' victory:** "They definitely made deep shots when we didn't, took more deep shots, coverage on those, it was kind of deflating to our defense. They converted on all of their red-zone drives, converted touchdowns. We didn't."

**McKeon on his emotions following Michigan's 15th defeat to the Buckeyes in the past 16 efforts:** "No one's happy. It's definitely really frustrating, especially for the seniors. It's just kind of the same thing every year. We have to execute better, and yeah it gets old, but we just have to play better against them."

**Michigan sophomore defensive lineman Aidan Hutchinson on the performance by Ohio State junior running back J.K. Dobbins:** "He's a really good running back, probably the best we've played all year. You have to give the props to him. He's a hard runner, and congrats to him."

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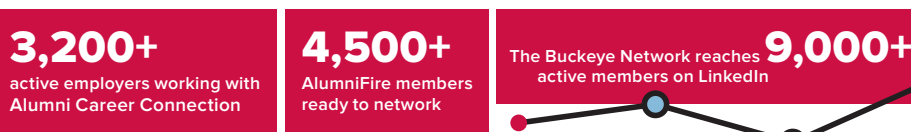
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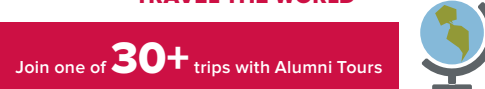
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# Career-Changing Michigan Game Shaped Olave

By WYATT CROSER  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

At the beginning of last season, three-star wide receiver commit Chris Olave was not the hot discussion topic among Ohio State fans. But he made the three-deep in the depth chart to start the year.

Nine games into the 2018 season, and the same could be said about Olave, who had only two catches for 19 yards to his name. But he started to show flashes against Michigan State and then Maryland, pulling in three catches for 51 yards total in those two matchups. But for the recruit with the No. 399 ranking, for the recruit ranked below 67 other players at the same position in the 2018 class, it was against Michigan where the then-freshman Olave made a name for himself.

"That game changed my career," Olave said. "We kind of build our program around that game, and that game was around our building everywhere. Having that game, in that game specifically, I believe it changed my career."

"That game" for Olave involved only two receptions for 48 yards, but both were for touchdowns and gave Ohio State a 14-6 lead that it never gave up on the way to a 62-39 rout over the rival Wolverines. Olave also added a blocked punt that was returned by Sevyn Banks for a touchdown that made it 34-19 in the third quarter.

The first-year wide receiver followed that performance – which came against not only the Buckeyes' largest rival, but against the No. 4 team and No. 1 pass defense in the country – with another great game against Northwestern, where he hauled in five catches for 79 yards and a touchdown to help Ohio State win the Big Ten.

He didn't record a stat against Washington in the Rose Bowl, but the train was already moving and Olave's career trajectory was already rising.

"It gives him confidence that if he can do it in that game, he can do it in any game, which he's shown he can do," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said on what Olave's performance against Michigan did for him as a player. "What a great opportunity for him to step up in a big-time rivalry game."

"I don't think anybody really knew up until

that game what he was capable of. Then what you've seen afterwards is what he is capable of. Obviously to play in a game like that and to become a legend in the history of the game as a freshman, to block a punt, have two touchdowns, that's just unbelievable. Look what he's done from there."

What Olave has done from there is lead the team with 705 receiving yards and 11 touchdowns, while also bringing in 41 receptions and doing so despite a trio of senior receivers – Austin Mack, Binjimen Victor and K.J. Hill – taking a large chunk of the snaps.

That flash that showed itself during the Michigan game in 2018 has turned into a consistently impressive output, with the sophomore receiver getting 30 yards or more in 11 of the 12 games, while having a touchdown in eight of 12.

But the statistics don't tell the whole story.

Against Rutgers, Olave was able to pull down an underthrown pass by Justin Fields using his foot while falling to the field. The next week against Penn State, Fields threw a ball into double coverage, and Olave caught what he described as a "perfect pass" in a contested area to give the Buckeyes a secure 28-17 lead.

Those difficult grabs have become the norm for Olave this season, which is something he has taken pride in as a player who knows he needs to deliver when he is called upon.

"Somebody had to make some plays during the game, and Coach Day said, 'Big-time players step up in big-time games,' and I believe I'm that, so I had to make that play for my team," Olave said about his touchdown grab against the Nittany Lions. "My thought is I have to go grab it, wherever it's at. If it's overthrown, underthrown, I have to go try and go get it and make the play."

"I look at myself as a big target, and I believe I can go up and fight for the ball with the best of them. So that's one of the parts of the game I try to work on. If he gives me the opportunity in the game to do that, I try to come down with it."

A year ago, heading into the final stretch of Ohio State's season, Olave was anything but a big target in the offense. But this season, even as an underclassman among a senior group of Hill, Victor and Mack, it has been Olave who has been counted on to make a lot of the crucial plays. According to Olave himself, at least



ANDREW LIND

**ANOTHER ONE** – Sophomore wide receiver Chris Olave has caught three touchdown passes in two career games against Michigan.

some of that added level of dependability can be traced back to his first big game in scarlet and gray.

"It was a little spark of confidence to myself," Olave said. "I believe it brought me closer to my teammates, them knowing that I can do that."

Day said on Nov. 26 that he was curious who would be the next Olave: the next player who would step up in The Game and go down in the books for it.

"This year, who is going to be the guy that steps up and becomes a legend in Ohio State football history? That's what is fun about playing in a game like this," he said.

And once again, Olave stepped up.

For the second year in a row, Olave brought in a touchdown grab against the Wolverines, this time doing it only once on two catches for 68 yards. It also was a chance for a new freshman receiver, Garrett Wilson, to make his highlight moment, as Wilson brought in

three catches for 118 yards and a score.

But it didn't matter if Olave had the same legendary performance as he did last year. At least, it didn't matter for how he is already perceived.

That same three-star commit, that same recruit with the No. 399 ranking, that same player ranked below 67 other players at the same position in the 2018 class, is now a star wideout for a 12-0 Ohio State team that is a game away from a spot in the College Football Playoff.

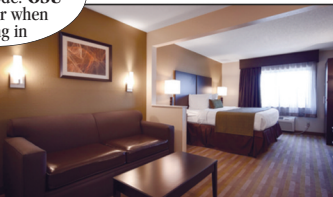
None of that might have happened if it weren't for that special performance Olave put on in the biggest game of his life.

"I'm just blessed with the opportunity to be playing in the situation," Olave said. "I'm blessed with these teammates and this program, and Coach Day gave me the opportunity, and (wide receivers coach Brian) Hartline believed in me, and I just have to make that play when my name is called."

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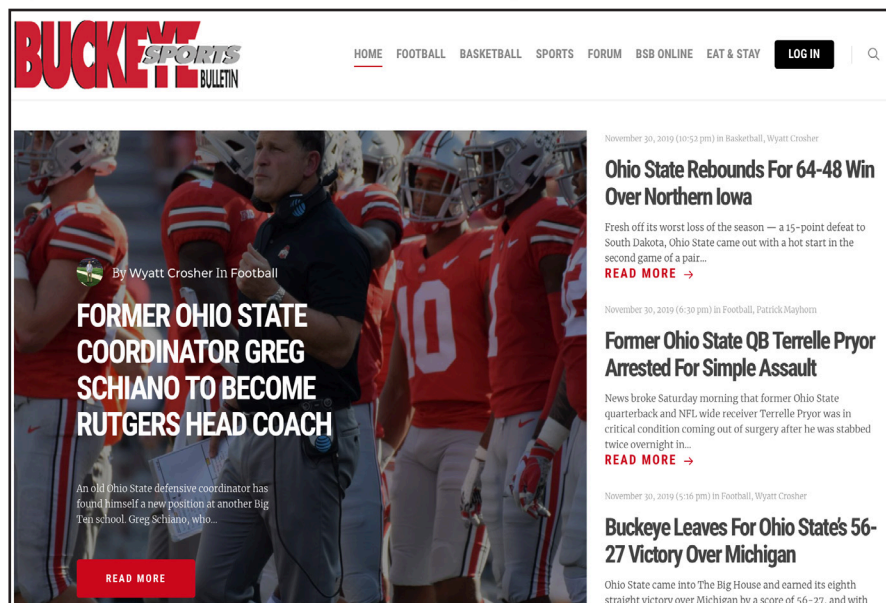
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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

# OSU's Next Great CB?

By Joe Dempsey  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ohio State defensive coaching staff trusted sophomore cornerback Sevyn Banks to start against Rutgers while resting fifth-year senior Damon Arnette for precautionary reasons.

Banks played well against the Scarlet Knights, earning him more playing time in the following games against Penn State and Michigan. But how did the young cornerback get to this point?

After coming in as a four-star recruit and the No. 58 overall prospect in ESPN's Top 100 for 2018, Banks did not see the field for the Buckeyes through their first eight games as a true freshman. The Orlando (Fla.) Jones product earned his way onto the field via special teams in the second half of his first season, flashing his playmaking ability.

When Ohio State welcomed Michigan for The Game in 2018, Banks etched his name in the history of the biggest rivalry in sports. Fellow freshman Chris Olave blocked a Wolverine punt, and Banks scooped it up and ran it back for a 33-yard touchdown.

Banks recalled his highlight-reel play as a blur in his mind, and even though he's from Florida, he appreciated the significance of making a big-time play against Michigan.

"Like I told my teammates when I came to the sideline, I didn't realize it happened until after the fact," Banks said. "And just knowing how big that game was, and the history of it, it's just a blessing that I could contribute to the team."

Banks committed to Ohio State with the mentality that he knew what he was getting into with the football program and the heated rivalry with the team Buckeye fans refer to as "The Team Up North." After playing in the 2018 rendition of The Game, a 62-39 Ohio State victory, Banks' perspective changed.

"No, I didn't understand at all," Banks said of the rivalry. "My teammates were telling me, and you'll say, 'Yeah I understand, I got you, bro.' But until you are actually in the moment and actually get on the field and the crowd is cheering for you and everything like that, you won't know."

Banks returned the blocked punt for a touchdown against Michigan and made one solo tackle against Maryland, marking the only stats he would record as a true freshman, but that experience helped propel him into his sophomore season.

"I was probably just starting to grasp around bowl season what I have to do to get on the field, and technique-wise was coming in and doing what I have to do to make a play," Banks said. "When I first came in, I didn't know, and now it's comfortable for me."

When Ryan Day became Ohio State's head coach in January 2019, one of the first things he did was bring in Jeff Hafley to coach the secondary and serve as a co-defensive coordinator with fellow new addition Greg Mattison.

Hafley joined the Buckeyes following seven years in the NFL, including the past three seasons with the San Francisco 49ers, where he coached All-Pro corner Richard Sherman, who spoke very highly of the secondary coach.

"His preparation is some of the best I've seen," Sherman said. "I've had some great defensive back coaches, some great defensive coaches and defensive minds. He is right up there with his preparation and how he breaks down film."

Hafley continually emphasizes the importance of using sound technique, having one's

eyes and feet in the right position on a consistent basis. Banks impressed Hafley in practice with his commitment to, as Hafley suggests, "the little things that make the big things possible."

With Arnette out against Rutgers, Hafley was questioned why Banks was the first corner to get the opportunity to fill in for the three-year starter.

"I just thought he took a big step, and I thought he earned it," Hafley said. "With me, it's always been and always will be, if you earn it every single day in practice then I'm going to get you in the game, and he did that. He's had huge growth and a huge job he's done in practice."

A two-time captain and three-year starter, senior safety Jordan Fuller spoke highly of Banks' potential and the progress the young corner has made.

"Just coming in as a freshman, you could just tell how talented athletically he was," Fuller said of Banks. "And this year he's taking steps on the mental side of the game for sure. But also, just his ability to finish now has really taken some huge steps. That's where Sevyn's at, and I can't wait to see how his career takes off even more."

Beginning his sophomore campaign as a special teams contributor, Banks again found a way to make an impact despite limited opportunities. After the Buckeyes rolled to a 35-5 lead in the first half against Miami (Ohio) on Sept. 21, they forced a punt from the RedHawks territory. Banks fired off the edge like he was shot out of a cannon and blocked the punt.

Although he started as a special teams player like many great Ohio State corners before him, including Marshon Lattimore, Gareon Conley, Denzel Ward and current standouts Jeff Okudah, Shaun Wade and Arnette, Banks has earned more snaps on defense with his play.

As someone who has matched up with Banks in practice for nearly two years, fifth-year senior H-back K.J. Hill has been very impressed with how far the second-year corner has come since arriving on campus.

"Sevyn developed on a good path from the start to the end right now," Hill said. "I feel like he gained confidence in himself and in his game. Him and Coach Hafley have been working together after practice. And Sevyn has come a long way. I feel like if any of the starters go down or anything, he can step in and it wouldn't be a drop-off right now. He's playing at a high level also with special teams and playing a big part on this team right now."

Beyond his impact on special teams, Banks has played well when substituted in with the defense, often in third-down or passing situations. The 6-1, 200-pound cornerback posted 11 tackles (10 solo), including 1½ tackles for loss, through 12 games and has been solid in coverage with one interception and three pass breakups.

Banks received recognition from Day for his play in the 2019 rendition of The Game, where he filled in for Wade, who did not play due to an undisclosed injury. Arnette also left the game with injury, so Banks may be needed to play more down the stretch for the Buckeyes.

While Banks may still be relatively unknown, even by Buckeye fans, Okudah made it clear that the sophomore corner from Orlando is one who deserves attention. Coaches and players used to talk the same way about Okudah, and now he is projected to be a top-10 pick in April's NFL draft.

"Sevyn Banks is the next great corner at Ohio State," Okudah said. "He's really taken a tremendous leap from the spring to fall camp to even now. He's taken big strides and Coach Hafley has really commended him for it."

FROM ONE GROUP OF SENIORS TO ANOTHER

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# Tight Ends Add To OSU Offense In Many Ways

By CRAIG MERZ  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

To be a tight end for Ohio State means playing in the trenches, being the second or third look for the quarterback, and the occasional moment of glory while otherwise toiling in obscurity.

It's not a position for everyone, but the Buckeyes have four quality tight ends this season who have contributed to the team's high-scoring offense.

Fifth-year senior Rashod Berry, fourth-year juniors Luke Farrell and Jake Hausmann, and sophomore Jeremy Ruckert have combined for 21 catches for 240 yards (20.0 yards/game) and six touchdowns through 12 games.

Ruckert leads with 12 grabs for 120 yards and three touchdowns. He had TDs of 25 and 3 yards vs. Florida Atlantic and a 7-yarder against Northwestern. He had an important catch in the second quarter at Michigan on Nov. 30 that went for 4 yards to the U-M 6. Junior back J.K. Dobbins ran it from there for a 21-13 lead.

The tight ends' numbers won't gain many All-Big Ten votes, but they don't tell the story of the importance of the position for the Buckeyes.

When Ohio State needs yards on the ground, it's a tight end – sometimes two in the game simultaneously – who helps pave the way for Dobbins to crack the 1,600-yard barrier this season to become the first Buckeye to rush for more than 1,000 yards as a freshman,

sophomore and junior.

The Buckeyes were at their best against some vaunted rush defenses, including 323 vs. Michigan State, 264 against Wisconsin, 229 in the Penn State game and 264 on the Wolverines.

Farrell said the tight ends see themselves as part of the offensive line, a singular unit.

"The goal of ours is to control the line of scrimmage," he said. "That's a big part of winning those games."

There's no mistaking that the tight ends are pivotal to the running game.

"We've been a really big part of it," Hausmann said. "We're at the point of attack a lot. A lot of the blocks we have are pretty crucial. If we can do a good job blocking, then we'll have some success."

Tight ends coach Kevin Wilson is tasked with trying to keep all four of the tight ends involved, especially when they know that receiving is not the top priority for the group.

"He's an intense guy, but he likes to joke around too," Hausmann said. "When it comes time to work, he's serious. In the meeting room and other times around the facility, he likes to mess around. It's a good mix."

Hausmann added that there is no jealousy among the players even though every day at practice there is competition to see who will be called upon to take the most snaps in the game.

"It's a testament of how hard we work in the tight ends room," he said. "A lot of us are capable of going out there and doing a good job. If all of us can go out and play to the best of our ability and we're able to rotate, it's good



ANDREW LIND

**DUAL PURPOSE** – Though he's most often used as a blocker, Ohio State sophomore tight end Jeremy Ruckert has 12 receptions for 120 yards and three touchdowns this season to lead all tight ends.

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for the whole team.”

The tight ends also contributed to the other side of the ball when Berry added defensive end duties.

He was recruited at that position but was moved to tight end two seasons ago when the Buckeyes needed help there.

His first action this season at defensive end was Nov. 9 vs. Maryland.

“He’s very talented, so he has the ability to do both,” head coach Ryan Day said. “Based on the game plan and based on what we’re seeing week in, week out, we’re going to try to plug him in where he can best help.”

Farrell is not surprised Berry has been able to practice with the offense and the defense.

“That’s a testament to what he can do,” Farrell said. “He’s very gifted and been able to manage it mentally going back and forth to meetings and just having the energy to do it too.”

Berry’s catch for 4 yards vs. U-M gives him two for the season and a total of 20 yards.

The Nov. 9 game at Rutgers proved to be big one for the tight ends when Hausmann had his first career TD and Farrell made a sterling one-handed grab in the back of the end zone for a 14-yard score.

“Sometimes I surprise myself,” Farrell said. “It’s awesome to be part of the offense like that. The best part was coming over to the sideline and seeing my unit. We all got pumped up for it, then we did it (again) when Jake scored later.”

Farrell entered the game with two catches, and he added two more for 36 yards against the Scarlet Knights. He also had 21-yard TD reception vs. Michigan State.

Hausmann waited a long time to get his first six-pointer for the Buckeyes, but it came in the third quarter on a 4-yard toss by Chris Chugonov.

“You have a good idea if you’re the main target or not, so it’s in the back of your head for sure, but with every pass play you’ve got to be ready to make a play,” Hausmann said. It was a big moment in his career.

“A lot of people reached out to me. It

was awesome,” he said. “It felt really good. I haven’t scored any touchdowns in five years since high school. It’s a good confidence booster.

“The confidence comes from being consistent. Coming into practice every day, you’ve got to bring it consistently. You have to have the coaches see that.”

Farrell lauded his teammate for the score. “It’s really big for him,” Farrell said. “I’m really happy for him, all he’s had to go through dealing with injuries and stuff.”

Hausmann was asked if he wondered if he would ever score for the Buckeyes.

“No. I kind of always envisioned myself scoring,” he said. “A lot of confidence a quarterback has in a tight end is you just have to prove you can catch the ball and get open in practice, so that’s what I’ve been trying to do.”

Hausmann has two catches for 13 yards this season.

Like Ruckert, Farrell had a catch in the red zone vs. the Wolverines. He took in a 14-yard pass from sophomore Justin Fields to the U-M 16. Two plays later, senior Austin Mack’s TD reception made it 49-27 in the fourth quarter. In 12 games, Farrell has five catches for 87 yards.

Hausmann thinks the tight ends have improved by facing the likes of Nick Bosa, Chase Young et al. in practices.

“The past four years going against first-rounders and a lot of really good defensive ends, it just gives you a confidence boost knowing you’ve gone against these really special ends and other guys on the defense,” Hausmann said.

“We just want to be the best tight end group we can be,” Farrell added.

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# Harley Fueled OSU's First Win Over Michigan

By MARK REA  
BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

As the Ohio State football program continues to bask in unprecedented success in its long-standing rivalry with the University of Michigan, this season marks the 100th anniversary of the first-ever win for the Buckeyes in the series that began in 1897.

When the two schools met one another for the first time, Michigan was already a college football powerhouse. The Wolverines had begun intercollegiate play with a game on May 30, 1879, against Racine College, a contest played at White Stocking Park in Chicago that the Chicago Tribune described as "the first rugby-football game to be played west of the Alleghenies."

When the Western Conference (later the Big Ten) was formed in 1896, Michigan was one of the league's seven charter members. Five years later, the school hired Fielding Yost to become its head coach, and Yost immediately transformed what had been a very good program into one of the country's best.

Yost's first Michigan team in 1901 was nicknamed the "Point-a-Minute" team after outscoring its opponents by an almost-unbelievable 550-0 margin in an 11-0 season capped by a 49-0 win against Stanford in the inaugural Rose Bowl. Before the Wolverines finally lost a game with Yost as head coach, they had gone 56 straight games without a defeat and scored 2,821 points while allowing only 42.

Meanwhile, members of the Board of Trustees at Ohio State, worried about the violent nature of football, weren't entirely sure they even wanted to field an intercollegiate team. Despite their misgivings, the Buckeyes began play in 1890, taking on mostly opponents whose campuses were in proximity to their own.

By the time in 1897 when Ohio State agreed to play Michigan for the first time – and make the train ride north to Ann Arbor for the game – the Buckeyes had played just 59 games in program history with only two of those contests having been waged outside the state of Ohio. OSU had traveled south to play Kentucky and Central Kentucky on back-to-back November afternoons in 1895. Battled-tested Michigan – on its way to a 6-1-1 record under first-year head coach

and Cleveland native Gustave "Dutch" Ferbert during that 1897 season – barely worked up a sweat against their opponents from the Buckeye State, rolling to a 34-0 victory against Ohio State in the first game of what would eventually become known as the greatest rivalry in American sports.

In its infancy, however, the series wasn't much of a rivalry at all. The truth is that it wasn't even competitive during most of its early years. After the inaugural game in 1897, the teams didn't meet again until 1900 when the game ended in an 0-0 tie, after which Ohio State and Michigan played one another for each of the next 12 seasons. But the best the Buckeyes could do during that stretch was another tie, this one a 3-3 contest in Columbus in 1910.

By the time the Wolverines captured a 14-0 decision in 1912, they had pushed their record to 12-0-2 in the series against the Buckeyes and had outscored their rivals by a 355-21 margin.

After a five-year break, the rivalry picked up again in 1918 – this time for good – but the result remained the same. Michigan scored a 14-0 victory, pushing its record against Ohio State to 13-0-2 with 11 shutouts. When the teams convened in Ann Arbor the following year, the entire country was in a celebratory mood. An armistice ending World War I had been signed Nov. 11, 1918, and hundreds of thousands of young fighting men had begun returning to the United States. Many of those former soldiers found their way to college campuses and football teams, including a slightly-built, 25-year-old from the fledgling U.S. Army Air Corps who had one year of college eligibility remaining.

Charles William Harley had been a high school sensation at Columbus East High School, where he had picked up the nickname "Chic" because of his Chicago roots. He was adept at nearly every sport from baseball to boxing, but he quickly earned fame as a football star, leading the Tigers to three league championships before deciding to play his college ball at Ohio State.

Harley spent the fall of 1915 on the freshman team at OSU but reportedly practiced quite a bit with the varsity players. That season, the Buckeyes finished 5-1-1, their best overall record

in eight seasons, and tied for third in the Western Conference, their best finish since joining the league in 1912.

When Harley joined the varsity team as a sophomore the following season, it was the final piece of a championship-caliber program head coach John W. Wilce had been trying to establish at Ohio State.

"Every program trying to assemble itself into a consistent winner needs a cornerstone," Wilce said years later. "Harley was our cornerstone."

From the moment he first set foot on Ohio Field, Harley was the featured star for the Buckeyes from his halfback position, running, throwing and kicking the ball with equal ease.

His first game as a collegiate player came in 1916 and resulted in a 12-0 win over old Ohio Conference foe Ohio Wesleyan. The contest drew only 4,889 fans to Ohio Field, which was located near the intersection of 18th and High streets. The tiny, mostly wooden structure would never again play host to such a small crowd.

Ohio State rolled to victory the following week with a 128-0 pounding of Oberlin that still ranks as the highest point total ever in school history. By the third game of the season, Harley's legend began to grow.

In their first Western Conference game of the season, the Buckeyes traveled to Illinois to take on future College Football Hall of Fame coach Robert Zuppke and his powerful Fighting Illini, a team Ohio State had never beaten in five previous tries. With Illinois clinging to a 6-0 lead in the fourth quarter, Harley broke off a 20-yard touchdown run on a sloppy field that tied the score.

Under the rules in those days, the scoring team punted the ball from the end zone to a teammate and the extra point was attempted from the spot on the field where the punt was caught. Harley punted to teammate Fred Norton on the 22-yard line. Then after changing his muddy shoes to clean ones, he calmly drop-kicked the extra point to give the Buckeyes a 7-6 victory.

It was the Illini's first loss at home in four years and knocked them out of the unbeaten ranks. When reporters asked Zuppke if his team had gotten caught looking ahead to a showdown

the following week with powerful Minnesota, the coach replied, "Give Ohio credit, especially the Harley boy. They beat us, fair and square."

Later that season, Harley ran for a 27-yard touchdown, returned a punt 80 yards for another TD and drop-kicked two extra points to account for all of his team's scoring in a 14-13 win over Wisconsin. The game was witnessed by a crowd estimated to be 12,500 at Ohio Field, then the largest ever to attend a football game in the state.

"That was a huge upset at the time," OSU football historian Jack Park told BSB. "The day Wisconsin played that game in Columbus, Illinois was playing at Minnesota, and Wisconsin's head coach – a fellow by the name of Paul Withington – went to Minnesota so he could scout those two teams. He thought they would beat Ohio State easily, so he let one of his assistants coach the team in Columbus.

"That was considered to be the biggest win in Ohio State football history to that point."

Harley went on to gain 107 yards in the first eight minutes of a 46-7 win over Indiana, and then he closed out his first season with another remarkable performance during a 23-3 victory over Northwestern, running for 20- and 67-yard touchdowns and setting up a third score with a 40-yard pass. He also kicked a 34-yard field goal.

The Buckeyes rolled through the 1916 season with a perfect 7-0 record – the program's first unblemished mark in history – and Ohio State won its initial Western Conference championship. For his part, Harley was named to the Walter Camp All-America team, becoming only the second Buckeye ever to be honored. Boyd Cherry was OSU's first-ever All-America honoree in 1914.

The Buckeyes were even better in 1917. They began the season in front of a crowd of more than 14,000 fans wedged into Ohio Field, a crowd that watched OSU roll to a 49-0 shutout of Case. It was the kickoff to a superlative season during which the team finished with an 8-0-1 record, the lone blemish being a 0-0 tie against Auburn in a game played near Camp Sheridan in Montgomery, Ala., on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. During the 1917 season, Ohio State outscored its nine opponents by a 292-6 margin.

With World War I raging in Europe, most young men in the United States either enlisted in the military or were drafted into service. Harley was no different, joining the U.S. Army Air Corps – the predecessor of the modern-day U.S. Air Force – in 1918 to become one of the country's first fighter pilots.

When the armistice was signed and soldiers began streaming home, Harley returned to Ohio State and was elected team captain despite the fact he hadn't played the year before. That Harley-less 1918 season featured a 3-3 record with each of the three losses to conference rivals, including a 14-0 loss to Michigan that extended Ohio State's winless streak against the Wolverines to 15 straight games.

## First Win Vs. Michigan

The Buckeyes entered the 1919 game against Michigan with an 0-13-2 record against the Wolverines, having been outscored by a 369-21 margin that included an 86-0 loss in 1902, still the worst loss in Ohio State history. That score would have been even more lopsided by today's standards since touchdowns counted for only five points in '02 and the game was stopped midway through the second half because of its one-sidedness.

On Oct. 25, 1919, the teams entered the game at Ferry Field in Ann Arbor undefeated and unscored upon.

Yost was in his 19th season as head coach of the Wolverines, and his defending conference champions had opened with a 34-0 win against



Chic Harley

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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

Case and a 26-0 shutout of Michigan Agricultural College (which later became Michigan State).

Meanwhile, Wilce was beginning his seventh season with the Buckeyes, and his team had gotten off to a 3-0 start in 1919. Harley scored a 35-yard touchdown run on his first carry of the afternoon in the season opener, an eventual 38-0 rout of Ohio Wesleyan, and home shutouts of Cincinnati (46-0) and Kentucky (49-0) had followed.

More than 5,000 Michigan students packed Hill Auditorium for a massive pep rally the night before the game, and more than 23,000 tickets were said to have been sold for Ferry Field, the Wolverines' home stadium which had a listed capacity of only 13,600 seats.

A light, misty rain began to fall about two hours before game time, but while the field was damp and slippery, the weather failed to dampen the spirits of the mostly partisan Michigan crowd, which erupted when the home team won the coin toss and chose to kick off to Ohio State.

Preferring to begin the game on defense is something of a normal practice in today's game, but in 1919 it was an unusual strategy to employ. But Yost's decision seemed to pay off immediately when OSU return man Gaylord "Pete" Stinchcomb fumbled the opening kickoff and Michigan senior Archie Weston recovered at the 10-yard line.

The Buckeyes were up to the task on defense, however, stuffing the Wolverines on their first three plays before U of M quarterback Ernie Vick's fourth-down pass was dropped in the end zone by senior Cliff Sparks.

Wilce refused to take any chances early in the game, so with his team pinned deep in their own territory, the coach instructed Harley to punt on first down on each of Ohio State's first two possessions. The result was that midway through the first quarter, Michigan had already run 12 plays from scrimmage while the Buckeyes had run none. But the OSU defense was playing so well that the Wolverines had accounted for only 22 total yards on those first 12 plays.

When Ohio State finally decided to run some plays on offense, Harley made an immediate impact with a 22-yard burst over right tackle. After a 3-yard gain by Harley, the Wolverines were penalized for tripping, pushing the ball to the Michigan 16-yard line. The Buckeyes got only 6 yards closer, and on fourth down, Harley's drop-kick attempt for a field goal sailed just wide of the goalpost upright and the game remained scoreless.

Michigan took over at its own 20 but couldn't

move the ball, setting up the game's first score. Ohio State put on a furious rush, and sophomore Cyril Myers blocked Sparks' punt with teammate James Flower recovering in the end zone for a touchdown. Harley came on to kick the extra point, and the Buckeyes had a 7-0 lead with two minutes remaining in the opening quarter.

OSU squandered another scoring opportunity near the end of the opening period.

Following a short Michigan punt, Harley completed a pair of passes to Stinchcomb and then kept the ball himself twice to set up a third-and-2 play at the Michigan 12-yard line. Harley went back to pass and connected again, this time to Flower, but the OSU senior fumbled the ball after the catch and it was recovered by Weston at his own 3.

Having averted that disaster, Michigan got on the scoreboard midway through the second quarter when Sparks drop-kicked a 43-yard field goal that press reports indicated would have been good from more than 50 yards. That made it 7-3 in favor of the Buckeyes, a score the teams would take into their respective locker rooms at halftime. The Wolverines took advantage of a short kickoff to begin the second half and set up shop on their own 40-yard line. But they managed only 2 yards in three plays before punting the ball away. The teams then traded possessions before Ohio State began a third-quarter drive at its own 33.

Stinchcomb crossed up the Wolverines on first down when he accepted the center snap and, instead of turning to hand the ball to Harley as he usually did, kept it himself and rambled straight down the middle of the field for a 30-yard gain. On the next play, the OSU quarterback pitched the ball to Harley, who took it around left end and zigzagged his way through the Michigan defense for a 37-yard touchdown run.

After Harley's touchdown, his kick-out to determine the point of the PAT try hit the ground before it was fielded, so the Buckeyes had to settle for a 13-3 lead with about seven minutes remaining in the third quarter.

Michigan tried to get back in the game late in the third period, marching inside the Ohio State 30-yard line before Stinchcomb knocked down a pass from Vick to a wide-open Robert Dunne, who would likely have turned the play into a Wolverine touchdown. Two plays later, the possession ended when Harley stepped in front of a pass from Sparks to make the interception.

The Buckeyes threatened to score again at

the beginning of the fourth quarter, but half-back Thomas Davies fumbled on the slippery field and Sparks recovered for the Wolverines at the Michigan 4-yard line.

Meanwhile, the home team was trying desperately to get back into the game, and Yost decided to go to the air. Unfortunately for Michigan, its passing attack was rudimentary and completely ineffective. Three different U of M players attempted passes during the fourth quarter, and all three pitched interceptions. Each time, Harley was the culprit, picking off throws from James Hammels, Sparks and Vick during the waning moments of the game to preserve the 13-3 margin and Ohio State's first-ever victory against Michigan.

The Buckeyes enjoyed a 176-85 advantage in total yardage, and the Wolverines were held to just three first downs in the game. All of Michigan's yardage came on the ground as its three passers failed to complete any of their 17 combined attempts. Wilce praised his team following the game, trying to offer congratulations to as many individuals as he could. Still, there was little doubt about the star of the game.

Harley ran the ball 17 times for 85 yards and a touchdown, completed 5 of 10 pass attempts for 37 yards, and punted 11 times for an average of 42.5 yards per kick. He also intercepted four Michigan passes during the afternoon – three of them in the fourth quarter – constantly thwarting any chance the Wolverines had of making a comeback.

Because statistics were inconsistent during his era, Harley's four-interception game has never been officially recognized by Ohio State. The official Ohio State Football Media Guide

lists the program's single-game record as three interceptions – first accomplished by Fred Bruney against Illinois in 1951 and matched eight times since, most recently by Damon Moore against Iowa in 1996.

"I know what the media guide says, but it's wrong," Park told BSB. "Harley most definitely had four interceptions that day and played one of the finest overall games anyone at Ohio State has ever played."

After the game, Yost broke a long-standing tradition by visiting the opponent's locker room to congratulate Wilce and Harley.

"You deserve your victory," Yost said. "You boys gave a grand exhibition of football strategy, and while I am sorry – dreadfully sorry – that we lost, I want to congratulate you."

"And to you, Mr. Harley, I believe you are one of the finest little machines I have ever seen. Again, I want to congratulate Ohio State."

After finally tasting victory against their archrivals in 1919, the Buckeyes repeated the feat in 1920 and '21, forever ending the stranglehold Michigan had enjoyed during the early years of the rivalry. Because of their initial dominance, the Wolverines continue to maintain a 58-51-6 advantage in the series. That edge has eroded over the past two decades, and the Buckeyes have dominated the series since 2001, winning 17 of 19 times during that stretch.

But the tide really began to turn when Harley led his team to victory a century ago.

In the 100 games since that 1919 breakthrough victory by the Buckeyes – and counting OSU's 56-27 victory this season – the series over the last century stands at 51-45-4 in favor of Ohio State.



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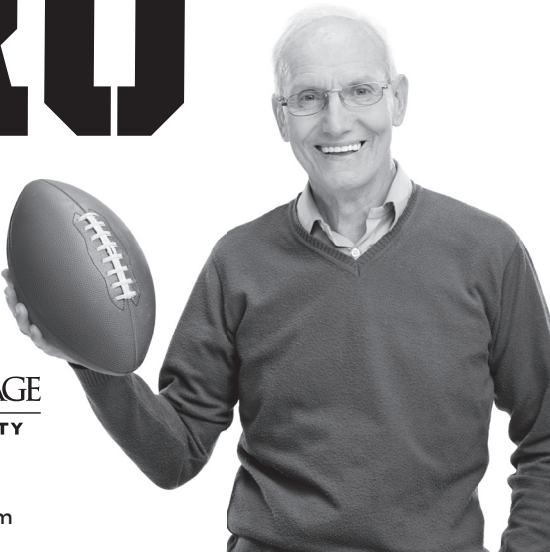
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# Ohio State Faces One Final Playoff Hurdle

By PATRICK MAYHORN  
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Despite a 64-7 record since the implementation of the College Football Playoff with the start of the 2014 season, Ohio State has never truly found itself in control of its own destiny entering a Big Ten Championship Game. In 2014, the Buckeyes won their way in, 59-0 against Wisconsin, but entered that game at No. 6 in the CFP poll, meaning that berth was not guaranteed with a win.

The Buckeyes missed on the Big Ten championship the next two seasons before returning in 2017 and 2018. Despite winning both of those bouts against Wisconsin in 2017 and Northwestern in 2018, the Buckeyes were unable to make up enough ground to return to the playoff. If there had been one unifying factor of Ohio State's first five seasons of the playoff era, it was questions entering the final ranking that would determine its postseason fate.

Because of that, 2019 serves as a first for the Buckeyes in the playoff era. Entering the Big Ten championship with an unblemished record as the nation's No. 1 team, Ohio State is not in need of help to qualify for the playoff. The Buckeyes will be in national title contention as long as they can get the job done in the Big Ten Championship Game for the first time since 2013.

Six years removed from that 34-24 loss to Michigan State, Ohio State is set to face off with a familiar Wisconsin program that has bounced back from a 38-7 loss to the Buckeyes on Oct. 26 on the way to a 10-2 season. The Badgers enter their sixth berth in the Big Ten title game as the No. 10 team in the AP poll and as a team that isn't just looking to play spoiler. With an upset win, Wisconsin would have a signature win that it has been chasing for years. After winning the first two Big Ten title games, the Badgers have lost in their last three appearances, two of which came against the Buckeyes.

Despite the previous result between

the two teams, the Badgers are still, statistically speaking, one of the country's best teams. They enter the game as the nation's 17th-best offense in points per game with 35.8 and the ninth-best defense, allowing 14.6 points per game.

With wins over Michigan, 35-14, and Minnesota, 38-17, to bolster their résumé, the Badgers would almost certainly be a playoff contender were it not for a devastating 24-23 loss to Illinois on Oct. 19.

## Players To Watch

First-year starting quarterback Jack Coan hasn't been anything amazing, but the Wisconsin offense really doesn't require him to be. The scheme is predicated on the rushing attack and ball control, and Coan is very good at both handing the football off and avoiding turnovers, with just four interceptions on the year. He struggled greatly against the Buckeyes in their first matchup, throwing for 108 yards on 10-of-17 passing, but he's been an overall solid player for the rest of the season. He has 2,309 yards and 17 scores, while completing 72.3 percent of his passes on the season.

The star of the offense is one of the brightest stars in college football: Doak Walker Award finalist Jonathan Taylor. The three-year starter has put on a show this season for the Badgers, racking up 1,761 yards and 20 scores on 279 carries. Perhaps more impressively, Taylor has rushed for over 200 yards in four games this season, including three of the final four games Wisconsin played.

Head coach Paul Chryst has raved all season about his workhorse.

"It's awesome," Chryst said of watching Taylor play all season. "It never gets old. He's special."

He hasn't been the only Big Ten coach impressed by the junior back. Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz heaped praise on Taylor after Wisconsin beat the Hawkeyes 24-22.

"He's as good a running back as we've seen during our time here," Ferentz, now in his 21st season as Iowa's head coach, said of Taylor, "and we've played against

## Get To Know ... Wisconsin

### About Wisconsin

- **2019 record:** 10-2 (7-2).
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Pro Style; Defensive Formation – 3-4; Starters Returning – Offense 5, Defense 6, Specialists 1.
- **Head Coach:** Paul Chryst, 52-14 in five years at Wisconsin, 71-33 in eight years overall.
- **Series History:** 84th meeting, Ohio State leads 60-18-5.
- **School Facts:** Location – Madison, WI; Enrollment – 43,820; Nickname – Badgers; Colors – Cardinal and White; Conference – Big Ten (West Division); Stadium – Camp Randall Stadium (Surface – FieldTurf; Capacity – 80,321)

### Top Offensive Returners

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Jonathan Taylor	279	1761	6.3	20
Nakia Watson	74	331	4.5	2
Garrett Groshek	36	185	5.1	2

Passing	Comp.-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Jack Coan	196-271	72.3	2309	17-4

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Quintez Cephus	45	720	16.0	6
Jake Ferguson	27	330	12.2	2
Garrett Groshek	25	261	10.4	0

### Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game – 35.8  
Rushing Yards Per Game – 243.9  
Passing Yards Per Game – 198.7  
Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 442.6

### 2019 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Aug. 30	at USF	W, 49-0
Sept. 7	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	W, 61-0
Sept. 21	MICHIGAN	W, 35-14
Sept. 28	NORTHWESTERN	W, 24-15
Oct. 5	KENT STATE	W, 48-0
Oct. 12	MICHIGAN STATE	W, 38-0
Oct. 19	at Illinois	L, 24-23
Oct. 26	at Ohio State	L, 38-7
Nov. 9	IOWA	W, 24-22
Nov. 16	at Nebraska	W, 37-21
Nov. 23	PURDUE	W, 45-24
Nov. 30	at Minnesota	W, 38-17
Dec. 7	Ohio State (Indianapolis)	8 p.m.

### Top Defensive Returners

Def. Leaders	Solo-Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Chris Orr	40-31	71	13.5-87	11.5-83
Jack Sanborn	40-23	63	8.0-43	4.5-29
Zack Baun	45-17	62	18.5-87	11.5-73

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Eric Burrell	3	14	4.7	0	10
Jack Sanborn	2	50	25.0	0	39
Noah Burks	1	68	68.0	1	68

### Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed – 14.6  
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 96.6  
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 180.4  
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 277.0

some pretty good players."

For Wisconsin, the offense doesn't just feature Taylor, it is Taylor. Receiver Quintez Cephus (45 receptions, 720 yards) and tight end Jake Ferguson (27 receptions, 330 yards) can make plays, but the majority of touches go to the running back, just as they did against Ohio State, when Taylor ran for just 52 yards on 20 carries.

Taylor is following behind one of the top lines in college football, led by junior center Tyler Biadasz, a 2018 All-American honorable mention and three-year starter. The Badger front has paved the way to the 15th-best rushing attack per game in the country, at 243.9 yards.

Defensively, Wisconsin leans heavily on three elite linebackers: Zack Baun, Chris Orr and Jack Sanborn. Each linebacker brings a different skill set to the table, but the three are united in their gaudy statistics and ability to create havoc in the backfield.

Leading the way in havoc is Baun, a pass-rushing specialist out of the outside linebacker spot. He has 18½ tackles for loss and 11½ sacks on the year as well as 62 total tackles, third on the team. A former high school quarterback, Baun has come into his own as a pass rusher in his senior season.

"Zack is truly one of those guys," Chryst said, "If we're going to be the best team we can be and the best defense, he's got to be a big part of it."

Orr has put up similarly solid pass-rushing numbers, with his own capping out at 11½ sacks in the regular season, though he has five fewer tackles for loss at 13½. Overall, however, Orr is a slightly more consistent player, leading the team in tackles with 71. Orr is also one of Wisconsin's captains, a role he takes very seriously.

"Knowing that I'm someone that the team is going to look to, that this defense is going to look to, it kind of gives me a little extra juice," Orr said. "It makes me study film more during the week and make sure I'm on top of everything, so I can be prepared and make plays when

they present themselves."

The last of the three, Sanborn isn't known for his ability to make big plays, with just eight tackles for loss and 4½ sacks, though he is second on the team in tackles with 63. He's more a middle linebacker, along with Orr, meaning more of his work is done in stuffing the run.

Behind the linebackers, Wisconsin is led by a young defensive backfield that has struggled with some growing pains this year, though their stats don't show it. The Badger defense ranks ninth in passing yards allowed per game at 180.4. Star sophomore cornerback Faion Hicks has been Wisconsin's top coverage man this season.

"Faion's been fun to be around," Chryst said. "None of us have played perfectly, but I think that he's done a great job of it. Like any player as they grow and mature, he's confident in what he's doing, the techniques that he's using and being asked to use."

"Then I think that there's a point in everyone's career where they start truly playing the game, you know, they're not thinking as much. I think he's at that point where he's playing it. It's been fun to see his growth. Obviously, we lean on him a ton."

Junior safety Eric Burrell is the top safety for Wisconsin, with 47 tackles and three interceptions.

In the front seven, the Badgers mostly rely on the linebackers, as mentioned, but sophomore defensive end Matt Henningsen is worth mentioning, though he mostly serves as a run stuffer, picking up 23 tackles on the year. Most of Wisconsin's pressure is designed to come off the edge.

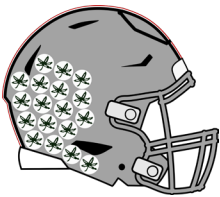
Kicker Collin Larsh has been a concern for the Badgers this year. He's hit on just 66.7 percent of his kicks, 10 of 15. He struggles from distance (4 of 9 from 30 yards or greater), which might mean that power kicker Zach Hintze could get a shot if Wisconsin needs a long kick. Hintze hit his first career field goal on senior day against Purdue, from 62 yards out.

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# Ohio State vs. Wisconsin

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## Projected Depth Charts

### WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...

**SS** 2 REGGIE PEARSON, 5-10, 197, R-FR. (18 Collin Wilder, 5-10, 194, Jr.)

**OLB** 41 NOAH BURKS, 6-2, 240, JR. (50 Izayah Green-May, 6-6, 221, So.)

**ILB** 54 CHRIS ORR, 6-0, 224, SR. (58 Mike Maskalunas, 6-3, 231, Jr.)

**ILB** 57 JACK SANBORN, 6-2, 232, SO. (45 Leo Chenal, 6-2, 250, Fr.)

**FS** 25 ERIC BURRELL, 6-0, 195, JR. (19 John Torchio, 6-1, 205, R-Fr.)

**CB** 5 RACHAD WILDGOOSE, 5-11, 197, SO. (8 Deron Harrell, 6-2, 182, So.)

**DE** 97 ISAIAH LOUDERMILK, 6-7, 293, JR. (52 David Pfaff, 6-2, 288, Sr.)

**NT** 93 GARRETT RAND, 6-2, 279, JR. OR 92 MATT HENNINGSEN, 6-3, 286, SO.

**DE** 56 ZACK BAUN, 6-3, 235, SR. (59 Tyler Johnson, 6-3, 241, Sr.)

**OLB** 1 FAION HICKS, 5-10, 185, SO. (21 Caesar Williams, 6-0, 188, Jr.)

**CB** 75 THAYER MUNFORD, 6-6, 310, JR. (58 Joshua Alabi, 6-5, 305, 5th-Sr.)

**X** 9 BINJIMEN VICTOR, 6-4, 199, SR. (5 Garrett Wilson, 6-0, 188, Fr.)

**LT** 73 JONAH JACKSON, 6-4, 305, 5TH-SR.

**LG** 71 JOSH MYERS, 6-5, 305, SO. (77 Harry Miller, 6-4, 310, Fr.)

**C** 76 BRANDEN BOWEN, 6-7, 315, 5TH-SR. (78 Nicholas Petit-Frere, 6-5, 295, R-Fr.)

**RG** 52 WYATT DAVIS, 6-4, 313, SO. (61 Gavin Cupp, 6-4, 308, Jr.)

**RT** 11 AUSTIN MACK, 6-2, 215 SR. (17 Chris Olave, 6-1, 185, So.)

**Z** 91 DRUE CHRISMAN, 6-3, 220, JR.

**P** 1 JUSTIN FIELDS, 6-3, 223, SO. (4 Chris Chugunov, 6-1, 208, 5th-Sr. OR 12 Gunnar Hoak, 6-4, 212, Jr.)

**QB** 14 K.J. HILL, 6-0, 195, 5TH-SR. (26 Jaelen Gill, 6-0, 195, R-Fr.)

**H** 89 LUKE FARRELL, 6-6, 250, JR. (88 Jeremy Ruckert, 6-5, 250, So.)

**TE** 2 J.K. DOBBINS, 5-10, 217 JR. (33 Master Teague, 5-11, 220, R-Fr.)

**K** 95 BLAKE HAUBEIL, 6-4, 225, JR.

### WHEN WISCONSIN HAS THE BALL...

**SS** 25 BRENDON WHITE, 6-2, 215, JR. (23 Jahsen Wint, 5-11, 200, Jr.)

**WLB** 39 MALIK HARRISON, 6-3, 240, SR. (7 Teradja Mitchell, 6-2, 242, So.)

**MLB** 20 PETE WERNER, 6-3, 239, JR. (36 K'Vaughan Pope, 6-1, 231, So.)

**SLB** 4 JORDAN FULLER, 6-2, 205, SR. (41 Josh Proctor, 6-2, 205, So.)

**FS** 24 SHAUN WADE, 6-1, 194, SO. (10 Amir Riep, 6-0, 195, Jr.)

**NICKEL** 1 JEFF OKUDAH, 6-1, 200, JR. (12 Sevyn Banks, 6-1, 200, So.)

**CB** 53 DAVON HAMILTON, 6-4, 310, 5TH-SR. (67 Robert Landers, 6-1, 285, 5th-Sr.)

**DE** 33 ZACH HARRISON, 6-6, 255, FR. OR 54 TYLER FRIDAY, 6-3, 260, SO.

**DT** 2 CHASE YOUNG, 6-5, 265, JR. (11 Tyreke Smith, 6-4, 267, So.)

**DT** 9 JASHON CORNELL, 6-3, 285, 5TH-SR. (92 Haskell Garrett, 6-2, 295, Jr.)

**DE** 3 DAMON ARNETTE, 6-0, 195, 5TH-SR. (26 Cameron Brown, 6-0, 188, So.)

**CB** 71 COLE VAN LANEN, 6-5, 312, JR. (65 Tyler Beach, 6-6, 309, So.)

**X** 4 A.J. TAYLOR, 5-11, 200, SR. (6 Danny Davis, 6-0, 194, Jr.)

**LT** 68 DAVID MOORMAN, 6-5, 307, SR. (76 Kayden Lyles, 6-3, 321, So.)

**LG** 61 TYLER BIADASZ, 6-3, 321, JR. (78 Jason Erdmann, 6-6, 328, Sr.)

**C** 60 LOGAN BRUSS, 6-5, 310, SO. (65 Tyler Beach, 6-6, 309, So.)

**RG** 78 JASON ERDMANN, 6-6, 328, SR. (70 Josh Seltzner, 6-4, 327, So.)

**RT** 3 KENDRIC PRYOR, 5-11, 180, JR. (87 Quintez Cephus, 6-1, 207, Jr.)

**Y** 15 ANTHONY LOTT, 6-0, 187, SR. (90 CONNOR ALLEN, 6-0, 168, SR.)

**P** 23 JONATHAN TAYLOR, 5-11, 219, JR. (37 Garrett Groshek, 5-11, 220, Jr.)

**QB** 17 JACK COAN, 6-3, 221, JR. (5 Graham Mertz, 6-3, 215, Fr.)

**FB** 84 JAKE FERGUSON, 6-5, 246, SO. (85 Cormac Sampson, 6-4, 280, R-Fr.)

**TE** 44 JOHN CHENAL, 6-2, 252, SO. (34 Mason Stokke, 6-2, 239, Jr.)

**K** 19 COLLIN LARSH, 5-10, 184, SO. (39 ZACH HINTZE, 6-0, 190, SR.)

- Depth charts compiled by Andrew Lind and Patrick Mayhorn

## How We See It

### OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE VS. WISCONSIN RUSH DEFENSE

All things considered, Ohio State would likely rather play Minnesota, but the Golden Gophers' 38-17 loss to Wisconsin in the Nov. 30 regular-season finale put the Badgers in the Big Ten title game Dec. 7 in Indianapolis. For one, Minnesota was a Cinderella story looking to play in the championship game for the first time. Secondly, the Buckeyes and Badgers will meet for the second time this season following OSU's 38-7 pasting in Ohio Stadium on Oct. 26.

If the Buckeyes and J.K. Dobbins can keep on truckin', they'll have no problems with Wisconsin. Now the second-leading rusher in OSU history behind Archie Griffin, Dobbins powered his way to 211 yards and four touchdowns on 31 carries vs. the Wolverines after pounding Penn State the previous game for 157 yards on 36 totes. In the first meeting vs. UW this season, he gained 163 yards on 20 carries, backup Master Teague rushed for 76 and OSU accumulated 264 yards on 50 carries (5.3 per rush). The Badgers are seventh nationally in rush defense at 96.6 yards per game after allowing 76 yards on 30 carries (2.5) to Minnesota. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

### WISCONSIN RUSH OFFENSE VS. OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

The Badgers' ground game begins and ends with standout Jonathan Taylor. He will get another chance to prove his worth against the Buckeyes. He's been able to run roughshod over most every team throughout his career - except Ohio State. In the 2017 conference title game, he was held to 41 yards on 15 carries (Dobbins had 17 rushes for 174 yards). In October, the former Heisman Trophy hopeful gained just 52 yards on 20 attempts vs. the Buckeyes. Against Minnesota last week in wintry conditions, he ran for 76 yards and two touchdowns on 18 carries (4.2 average). Ohio State is stout against the run, ranking fourth (91.2 yards per game), including 91 yards on 26 attempts (3.5 avg.) by U-M. If Taylor can figure a way to break loose, the Badgers' chances of winning increase exponentially. **EDGE: EVEN**

### OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE VS. WISCONSIN PASS DEFENSE

Justin Fields was marvelous, gimpy knee and all, against the Wolverines. He threw for 302 yards, completing 14 of 25 passes. His four touchdowns give him 37 compared to one interception. Freshman Garrett Wilson (three catches, 118 yards, one touchdown) was his favorite receiver against U-M, but five players had at least two catches. One game, Chris Olave is the target. The next it's K.J. Hill or Austin Mack. Fields has weapons and will use them. The key will be line protection. Wisconsin will try to pressure Fields, but that doesn't usually work because he is nimble enough to avoid the rush and mentally quick to read the coverage and pick apart a secondary. The Badgers gave up 296 passing yards to the Golden Gophers, but 96 of them by Minnesota QB Tanner Morgan came in the fourth quarter when the game was out of reach. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

### WISCONSIN PASS OFFENSE VS. OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Badgers quarterback Jack Coan is tasked with not losing a game. He threw for 280 yards and two TDs while completing 15 of 22 against Minnesota. He was 10 for 17 for 108 yards vs. the Buckeyes in October. His go-to guy vs. the Golden Gophers was receiver Quintez Cephus, who collected five passes for 114 yards and a TD. Taylor had a 28-yard TD catch to show off his versatility. OSU was challenged by Michigan's passing game in the first half when Shea Patterson threw for 250 yards. Adjustments were made, and he was 4 of 24 for 55 yards the final two quarters. Defensive end Chase Young, the national sack leader with 16½, was schemed out of the picture against U-M and did not have a tackle. The Buckeye secondary works in tandem with the line. If the rush is on, the corners and safeties are ready to pounce on any hurried throws. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

### SPECIAL TEAMS

The Badgers used a reverse on a kickoff to motor 49 yards, and Anthony Lotti averaged 33.0 yards for his three punts with one dropped inside the 20 against Minnesota. Wilson had his second muffed punt of the season in the Michigan game, and it changed the momentum for a while. The Buckeyes have not been a good return team for years, and it shows. **EDGE: EVEN**

### INTANGIBLES

After beating Penn State on Senior Day in Columbus and drilling U-M, what's left in the tank for a third straight week of mental and physical toughness? Coach Ryan Day has done an outstanding job of keeping his team focused, but going against a team he's beaten already will be his toughest challenge. **EDGE: EVEN**

### STAFF PREDICTION

Wisconsin must be encouraged that it trailed only 10-0 at the half in October before the Buckeyes took over. With the game at a neutral site, the Badgers have to be excited by that as well. The Buckeyes need to remember one thing: They haven't accomplished anything yet. **OHIO STATE, 42-24**

# OSU Aims To Beat U-M In Recruiting, Too

## OSU Football Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2020 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the 247Sports composite rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Paris Johnson	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	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	★★★★	Maryland Heights (Mo.) Pattonville
Lathan Ransom	S	6-1	193	★★★★★	Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic
Kourt Williams	ATH	6-1	216	★★★★	Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco
Jacolbe Cowan	DT	6-5	262	★★★★	Charlotte (N.C.) Providence Day School
Ryan Watts	CB	6-3	187	★★★★	Little Elm, Texas
Miyan Williams	RB	5-10	210	★★★	Cincinnati Winton Woods

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 Prep
Jayden Ballard	WR	6-2	175	★★★★	Massillon (Ohio) Washington
Ben Christman	OT	6-6	299	★★★★	Richfield (Ohio) Revere
Reid Carrico	LB	6-3	225	★★★★	Ironton, Ohio
Marvin Harrison	WR	6-4	184	★★★★	Philadelphia St. Joseph's

Ohio State junior linebacker Pete Werner was not considering Michigan when he was being recruited as a four-star prospect from Indianapolis Cathedral, but the Wolverines played a significant role in his decision to commit to the Buckeyes in December 2016.

## RECRUITING OUTLOOK Andrew Lind

"When I was a recruit, I was (in the) first row and I saw Curtis Samuel run that ball in the end zone. That kind of brought me here," Werner said, recalling the game-winning touchdown in Ohio State's 30-27, double-overtime win over Michigan. "That was crazy. It was the factor. I saw that, and I was like, 'Whoa. Are you kidding me? I have to come here.'"

Werner isn't the first player to have his recruitment impacted by the magnitude of The Game, and he certainly won't be the last. In fact, it's one of the first things head coach Ryan Day discusses with a prospect.

"In recruiting we talk to them right from the get-go," Day said during his weekly press conference on Nov. 26. "That's one of the reasons why some people come to school here, is for the rivalry. We make such a big deal of it. As you know, when you walk in the building, it's all over the place. We talk about it all the time, talk about it recruiting in all areas, strength and conditioning, football, other areas. It's something that you just ingrain. The more these guys are in the program, the more they get it."

That's a big reason Ohio State has won 17 of the last 19 games in the rivalry dating back to Jim Tressel's arrival ahead of the 2001 season, including the Buckeyes' 56-27 victory in Ann Arbor on Nov. 30.

Growing up in Southern California, sophomore offensive guard Wyatt Davis heard of the

Ohio State-Michigan rivalry but never understood the disdain the two programs have for one another. That was until he wore a blue tank top to the Woody Hayes Athletic Center during his unofficial visit in June 2016.

"One of the hosts was like, 'Do you have a jacket or anything? Take that off because you're not allowed to wear blue,'" Davis said. "I'm just kind of sitting there like, 'Well, it's like 100 degrees in the summer.'"

"Word got to Coach (Urban) Meyer, and I had the jacket on. He unzipped it and he was like, 'Do you have that ugly color on?' And I was like, 'Yeah.' He's like, 'Don't ever do that again.' So I was like, 'OK, well, I definitely won't do that again.' That made me realize that this is real. This is very historic, and we take that very seriously around here."

Davis committed to Ohio State just six days later.

Senior safety and two-time team captain Jordan Fuller had a similar experience coming out of Old Tappan, N.J. – an area that has long been considered a Michigan pipeline.

"I thought Ohio State was just a football factory that didn't care about its players," said Fuller, who took official visits with the Buckeyes and Wolverines on back-to-back weekends in January 2016. "To be honest, it came down to trusting and believing that Ohio State would develop me the most on and off the field. (Athletic director) Gene Smith said that he would mentor me after one of my visits, Real Life Wednesdays were in place and they were producing great NFL talent."

Fuller committed to Ohio State two weeks later.

The gap between the two programs has only widened in recent years, as the Buckeyes have signed the Big Ten's highest-rated recruiting class every year since former head coach Urban Meyer's arrival ahead of the 2012 cycle. And Day's first class – which ranks No. 4 in the 247Sports composite team rankings behind Clemson, LSU and Alabama while Michigan comes in at No. 13 overall – will certainly continue that streak.

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## A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

### 30 Years Ago – 1989

Because of a friendship struck between a pair of baseball players, Ohio State was in the running to land one of the premier football players in the United States. Chris Weinke of Cretin-Derham Hall High School in St. Paul, Minn., was generally considered the best drop-back passing prospect in the country. But he was also an accomplished baseball player and became friends with Ohio State pitcher Scott Klingenberg while both were playing for Team USA in the Junior Olympics.

Klingenberg, who had signed with Ohio State the spring prior, talked so favorably about Ohio State that Weinke became interested.

"We became real good friends over the summer," Weinke told BSB in late November. "Scott says he likes everything there is about Ohio State, so I found out more about the program."

### 25 Years Ago – 1994

Ohio State couldn't be counted out of the race for halfback Andre Barkley quite yet. The Cincinnati native had committed to North Carolina in early November, but his commitment was looking shaky, due in large part to the coaching situation in Chapel Hill.

Barkley said when he committed that he wanted to play for Tar Heels head coach Mack Brown. Brown, however, had been popping up for potential larger job openings following the end of the season, given his 40-17-1 record at North Carolina in the five years prior. Brown was reportedly in the running if Oklahoma opted to make a change from head coach Gary Gibbs.

That instability didn't have Barkley back in the market yet, but if Brown were to leave, the 6-1, 195-pound tailback could become available.

Because his then second choice, Penn State, had filled its class, Ohio State looked to be in the driver's seat if Barkley decided to back away from his commitment.

### 20 Years Ago – 1999

Ohio State's 2000 recruiting class increased to 14 verbal commitments Nov. 16 when Freehold (N.J.) Boro linebacker Darrell Reid issued his commitment.

Reid (6-3, 240, 4.75) told SuperPrep prior to the season that he would commit if Ohio State, his longtime favorite, ever offered.

But the Buckeyes showed only lukewarm interest until

assistant Shawn Simms called Reid Nov. 8 to see whether Reid would be available to make an official visit for the Illinois weekend Nov. 13.

"I've always wanted to go to Ohio State, but they didn't start recruiting me until just recently," Reid told BSB. "It just happened the previous Monday. They looked at my tape and liked it. They called me up to invite me out to visit that weekend."

Reid said he enjoyed that visit immensely.

"During the visit, I was about ready to commit," he said. "I'm a big Buckeye fan, and I like Ohio. Columbus is just incredible. I liked the players too."

"I came home and talked to my mom and decided to commit."

### 15 Years Ago – 2004

Ohio State hosted the majority of its 2005 class for a 37-20 win over Michigan, along with a number of top uncommitted targets. Leading the way for the latter group was a trio of Floridians: Jacksonville Sandalwood running back Maurice Wells, Pompano Beach Blanche Ely offensive lineman Ronnie Wilson and Fort Lauderdale Dillard linebacker Elijah Hodge.

All three had already visited campus, but this served as the official visit for the blue-chip recruits.

"I had a lot of fun," Hodge said. "The game was very intense. There's nothing like it. You have to see it to know what it's like. It was great."

The Florida group wasn't the only state well represented in Columbus, as the Buckeyes brought in a significant home-state group, including Columbus Brookhaven athlete Alex Daniels, Bellbrook linebacker Austin Spitler and Akron Garfield running back Chris Wells, a member of the 2006 class but already considered one of the nation's best.

"I loved it," Wells told BSB. "The crowd, the excitement, the whole town – it was nice."

### 10 Years Ago – 2009

As Ohio State was preparing to face Michigan on Nov. 21 in Ann Arbor, the Buckeyes saw some movement on their recruiting board for offensive linemen.

One name was removed from consideration, when Sunbury (Ohio) Big Walnut offensive tackle Skylar Schofner decided on Nov. 21 that he would be attending Michigan State. OSU had kept in touch with Schofner, but the four-star, rated the No. 35 offensive tackle, didn't want to wait any longer on an Ohio State

scholarship offer.

"This is the right move for me," he said after Michigan State's 42-14 loss to Penn State. "I can see myself here at Michigan State helping them win. Today was a hard loss for the team, but I'm not going to change my opinion of what the future holds."

### Five Years Ago – 2014

Ohio State hosted more than a dozen top prospects for its win over Michigan, as the Buckeyes looked to close out what it still hoped could be a top-five class in the nation.

Even without a few recruits committed to other schools who were expected to make the trip but didn't, such as L.J. Scott (Michigan State) and Drew Richmond (Tennessee), the Buckeyes had one of the biggest recruiting weekends of the year.

St. Catharines (On.) Canada Prep Football Academy four-star defensive tackle Neville Gallimore, Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy three-star offensive lineman Mirko Jurkovic, Towson (Md.) Calvert Hall College three-star wide receiver Lawrence Cager and Pickerington (Ohio) Central three-star defensive tackle DaVon Hamilton all represented the 2015 class.

Meanwhile, there was a large contingent for 2016 as well, including Cleveland St. Ignatius four-star offensive tackle Liam Eichenberg; North Ridgeville, Ohio, four-star running back Demario McCall; Canton (Mich.) Plymouth four-star offensive tackle Michael Jordan; Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic four-star quarterback Jarrett Guarantano; Detroit Cass Tech four-star offensive guard Michael Onwenu; and Detroit Martin Luther King four-star cornerback Lavert Hill.

### One Year Ago – 2018

Ohio State's search for offensive linemen in the 2019 class continued Nov. 21 when the Buckeyes offered Indianapolis Ben Davis three-star offensive tackle Dawand Jones. The 6-8, 380-pounder picked up his offer from OSU after he spent the day in Columbus for an unofficial visit, watching practice and checking out campus.

"I think I'm going to take one (official visit) to Ohio State and then somewhere else for the last one," Jones said. "Probably TCU, but we'll see. We're trying to do Sunday-Monday officials so I don't have to miss a game of basketball, of course. I just don't want it to get in the way of basketball."

"We put their recruiting list on the board (in director of player personnel Mark Pantoni's office) and compare our guys to theirs just about every day, every week," Day said. "Part of how you live this rivalry is you compare yourselves every day against them. It just gives you some awareness of where we're at, the battles that we're in against certain guys. We rank our people. We just want to always know exactly who those guys are because we know we're going to be playing them. That's what's important."

### Former Wide Receiver Target Enters Transfer Portal

On Nov. 26 – just three days after he was held to three catches for 28 yards in a 28-17 loss to Ohio State – it was reported that Penn State wide receiver Justin Shorter had entered his name into the transfer portal. Nittany Lions head coach James Franklin confirmed Shorter's departure the following day, and his name was removed from the roster before the team's Nov. 30 win over Rutgers.

Shorter, a former five-star recruit and the top-rated wide receiver in the class of 2018, was among the Buckeyes' top targets at the position in that recruiting cycle. But he committed to Penn State early in the process and never wavered in his pledge.

However, Shorter grew close during the recruiting process with current Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields, who was once committed to the Nittany Lions but reopened his recruitment before eventually choosing Georgia. Following a camp the two worked out at together before their senior seasons, Shorter even

Continued On Page 28



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# Commit Martinez Michigan's Player Of The Year

Continued From Page 27

called Fields "that dream quarterback everyone wants on their team."

Given that bond and how well the Buckeyes' receiving unit has played the last two seasons under assistant coach Brian Hartline's guidance, there were questions about Shorter's interest in Ohio State following news of his departure. But sources within the program have told Buckeye Sports Bulletin such a marriage is unlikely for a few reasons.

First, Shorter would likely be required by

the NCAA to sit out one season. Fields, meanwhile, is on track to leave for the NFL following his junior year, which makes it highly unlikely the two would ever get to play together.

Secondly, Ohio State is set to bring on four wide receivers in the current recruiting cycle in Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia five-star Julian Fleming; Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic four-star Gee Scott; Rockwall, Texas, four-star Jaxon Smith-Njigba; and Maryland Heights (Mo.) Pattonville Senior four-star Mookie Cooper.

Lastly, the Buckeyes already hold a pair

of commitments for 2021 in Massillon (Ohio) Washington four-star Jayden Ballard and Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep four-star Marvin Harrison. Ohio State is also among the top schools for Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star Beaux Collins and Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Cardinal Gibbons three-star Troy Stellato.

Simply put, there's not enough room – or the need – to add Shorter, even with his high ceiling. And that's not even mentioning the fact that sophomore Chris Olave and freshmen Garrett Wilson and Jameson Williams will be on Ohio State's roster for the foreseeable future.

He received 54 of the 67 votes from coaches and media.

The 5-11, 183-pound Martinez totaled 2,124 yards and 36 touchdowns on 264 carries for Muskegon this fall. He also completed 64 of 109 passes for 1,258 yards and 11 scores compared to just four interceptions. And, for good measure, he even took his lone kickoff return 90 yards for a touchdown.

However, Martinez's high school career came to a disappointing close on Nov. 30 with a 30-7 loss to River Rouge at Detroit's Ford Field. Though he did score the Big Red's lone touchdown, Martinez was limited to 108 yards on 34 carries and was sacked five times.

Muskegon – the winningest program in Michigan history and five-time state champion – has finished as the state runner-up six times in the last eight years, though the Big Red did win the title during Martinez's sophomore year in 2017.

## Commit Martinez Brings Home Individual Award

Ohio State three-star athlete commit Cameron Martinez on Nov. 26 was named the Michigan High School Player of the Year, becoming the first athlete to win the award in back-to-back seasons in its seven-year history.

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# ASK AN ANALYST

## With Buckeye Grove's Marc Givler

Now that Ohio State has landed its first running back commitment for the class of 2020 in Cincinnati Winton Woods three-star Miyan Williams (5-10, 210), do you think the staff will look to add another prospect at the position?

"Ohio State will be content with just Williams in the class at running back if it comes to that, but I still expect them to continue their pursuit of Dalton, Ga., four-star Jahmyr Gibbs (5-11, 194). They have spent a lot of time and effort recruiting the Georgia Tech commit over the past couple of months, and I don't see them walking away from that one.

"They'll also continue to reach out to Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic five-star Bijan Robinson, but that is a huge long shot at this point given his commitment to Texas. Outside of that, I don't think we'll see too much movement at running back in 2020 now that Williams is in the fold."

**Ohio State welcomed Draper (Utah) Juan Diego Catholic four-star defensive end Xavier Carlton (6-7, 262) to campus for an official visit against Penn State on Nov. 23. Where do you believe the Buckeyes now**

**stand in his recruitment when compared to Pac-12 Conference teams closer to home**

"I still have Utah as the favorite, but the Buckeyes made a good impression and will try to keep pushing once in-home visits get started (on Dec. 1). They are in the mix, but probably not in the driver's seat right now."

**Ohio State appears to be the early front-runner for 2021 Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star offensive tackle J.C. Latham (6-6, 285) following his unofficial visit for the 28-17 win over Penn State. What do the Buckeyes have to do moving forward to ultimately secure his pledge?**

"Ohio State has been in a really strong position for Latham for a few months now, and I believe it solidified that over the Penn State game weekend. The Buckeyes got in there early and have been a pretty big part of his transition from a defensive line prospect to an offensive line prospect. They were not only one of the first schools to suggest that might be his best spot but to recruit him for that position. Combine that with their success on the field and his friend-

ship with 2020 four-star cornerback commit Lejond Cavazos, and the Buckeyes have a lot going for them right now.

"At this point, I think he'll probably take some spring official visits, but really they just need to stay the course because they are in very good shape."

**Ohio State landed a commitment from one of the top-ranked players in the state of Michigan for the current recruiting cycle in Muskegon three-star athlete Cameron Martinez. Are there any prospects in the state with whom you see the Buckeyes making early moves in the class of 2021?**

"Ohio State has definitely prioritized West Bloomfield four-star running back Donovan Edwards, Belleville four-star defensive tackle Damon Payne and Clarkston four-star offensive tackle Rocco Spindler. I think the Buckeyes are in the top two or three for all of those guys, and while it's unlikely that they land all three, they should be able to get at least one, with Payne being perhaps their best bet. That said, I do think they are in the top two – along with Michigan – for Edwards at this stage."

Despite his success as a high school quarterback, Martinez has been recruited by Ohio State as an athlete who could play a multitude of positions, including wide receiver or in the secondary. But given the aforementioned logjam on offense and his unique blend of size and speed, the coaching staff believes he could be perfect fit for the Bullet position.

### Running Back Target Commits To Miami (Fla.)

This summer, Ohio State was on the

verge of landing commitments from Tucson (Ariz.) Salpointe Catholic five-star running back Bijan Robinson and Deerfield Beach, Fla., four-star running back Jaylan Knighton. But in a matter of just a few days, the duo shockingly decided to attend Texas and Florida State, respectively, leaving the Buckeyes and running backs coach Tony Alford scrambling at the position.

Fast-forward a few months, and Knighton had decided to reopen his recruitment amid the Seminoles' firing of head coach Willie Taggart on Nov. 3.

Naturally, questions arose on whether Alford would attempt to rekindle the relationship with the 5-9 and 194-pound Knighton, who is considered the nation's 10th-best running back for the class of 2020. But his decision to attend Florida State's recruiting event in late July – just days after giving a silent verbal commitment to Ohio State – seemingly burned all bridges between the two parties.

In the meantime, the Buckeyes focused most of their attention on Cincinnati Winton Woods three-star running back

Miyan Williams, who flipped his pledge from Iowa State following his unofficial visit for the 28-17 win over Penn State on Nov. 23.

Knighton, meanwhile, took an unofficial visit to Miami (Fla.) that same weekend and announced his commitment to the Hurricanes on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 28.

*For the latest in Ohio State football recruiting news, be sure to check out [BuckeyeSports.com](http://BuckeyeSports.com), free to all BSB print subscribers, daily.*

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# Unselfish Forward Young Puts Winning First

By **JOE DEMPSEY**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

"You can tell how much playing here means to him."

That's what Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann said of the passionate play of junior forward Kyle Young.

When watching the Buckeyes, it's difficult not to notice how the 6-8, 205-pound Young aggressively hounds rebounds, defends bigger post players and makes plays that are conducive to winning.

Holtmann, who initially recruited Young to Butler when he was the head coach of the Bulldogs, has been impressed with Young's ability to make plays with or without the ball in his hands.

"He does not need the ball to impact the game," Holtmann said of Young. "And that's hard to find nowadays in basketball. Guys want the ball. They need the ball and they want touches. And he doesn't need it to impact the game. He can do it with his energy and playing off other people's."

Although Young ranks seventh on the team in minutes per game at 20.7, he is second in rebounding and steals, third in blocks and fourth in scoring through the Buckeyes' 7-0 start. Along with his per-game averages of 8.9 points and 6.6 boards, Young leads the Buckeyes with an ultra-efficient 65.8 percent (25 of 38) field-goal percentage.

"I'm just trying to play efficient and do what my team needs," Young said. "When stuff's there, just go get it. I'm making plays off of rebounds, making effort plays, so just doing whatever I can."

The Massillon (Ohio) Jackson product was not always a key contributor and among team leaders in several statistical categories. As a freshman, Young averaged only 1.8 points and

1.6 rebounds in 8.6 minutes per contest. Before Young's sophomore season, forward Micah Potter transferred to Wisconsin, thrusting Young into a bigger role.

Young answered the call, averaging 6.0 points and 4.4 boards in 20.5 minutes per game despite battling injuries, including a stress fracture in his leg, throughout most of the season. He shot 67.2 percent from the field as a second-year player, making 78 of 116 shots.

The Canton, Ohio, native has a knack for rebounding but also makes plays on defense. Young, who is a capable scorer and solid passer for a forward, was asked which stat is his favorite to record.

"I like rebounding the ball but anything I can do for the team, to be honest," Young said after a pause. "If I got an open shot, I'm going to take it. If not, pass to the open guy."

Putting the team first is a common theme with Young, who often says phrases like "anything I can do for the team," which is appreciated by those in scarlet and gray.

"His teammates really appreciate how unselfish he is, and you see that," Holtmann said. "He is a tremendous teammate. Last year, we probably needed him to score more than probably he's ever felt comfortable doing. He wasn't a huge scorer in high school even. I think that he's better when he doesn't necessarily feel that pressure on top of him and he can kind of play off other guys. He's been able to do that so far this year at a really high level."

Following the Buckeyes' 86-51 blowout of Stetson on Nov. 18, Hatters head coach Donnie Jones gave Young rave reviews, even comparing him to a former NBA standout.

"When I was at Florida, we had a guy named Joakim Noah who was a little taller, but that's what he did," Jones said in the postgame press conference.

Hitting 5 of 5 shots against Stetson, Young posted a career-high 15 points. The compari-

son to Noah did not come from his ability to put the ball in the basket, though, as neither is a prolific scorer. Young added 10 rebounds, one block and one steal to his excellent stat line, but Jones took the comparison beyond the box score.

"Those guys, they show up on the stat sheet sometimes with their rebounds and not always their points, but he brings a different toughness," Jones said. "He knows his role. He knows who he is. You know what you're getting from him every night. He's a winner, competitor. He just impacts winning. And when you bring those kind of guys on your team, those guys give you a chance in March to go very far."

Young said he had never had anyone compare his game to someone else's.

"That's probably the first," Young said.

The comparison was certainly a favorable one for Young as Noah won two NCAA national titles at Florida, with a second-team All-American nod before becoming the No. 9 pick in the NBA draft. The majority of Noah's success in pro basketball came as a member of the Chicago Bulls, where he made two All-Star teams and earned a Defensive Player of the Year award.

"I just remember he was a dawg," Young said of Noah. "He was a tough player and played hard, so that's respect for sure."

Primarily known as a hard worker who plays as hard as he can regardless of the time and score, Young has developed the reputation of a grinder and energy guy. Through the first seven games of his junior campaign, he has taken his game to another level.

At times, Ohio State will give Young the ball either on the wing or in the paint, so he can make a move and score a bucket or get an assist. He also knocked down his first three-point attempt of the season against Stetson, hitting nothing but net after a smooth release.

"I've just got to shoot it confidently," Young

said. "I'm a guy, I just like the game to come to me, so I don't really want to force anything. But if it's there, I'm definitely going to shoot it."

Holtmann has liked how Young's dedication in the gym is showing its benefits early in the year. He is 1 of 3 from deep and 11 of 18 from the charity stripe.

"You can see it's a smoother (free-throw) shot, better touch. He's relaxing more at the line," Holtmann said. "We have tried to throw him the ball in the post some. He's done a good job. He's got to continue to get better at finishing over size, the kind of size he's going to consistently see. That's going to be critical. I don't want to make too much of it. What he's really done is played off of others really well and used his athleticism and his energy to impact the games on both ends."

Holtmann and Jones are not the only coaches who have noticed the game-changing abilities of Young. The Buckeyes pulled away for a 71-52 victory against Kent State on Nov. 25, with Young scoring only four points with five rebounds, two assists and one steal. Despite the pedestrian stat line, Golden Flashes head coach Rob Senderoff spoke highly of the third-year forward, whom he had recruited in high school.

"Kyle - he's one of those guys. He impacts winning," Senderoff said. "As a coach, you're trying to win the games, and not everything he does looks the best. But he competes at a really high level. And again, tonight he took four shots. I could be wrong, I don't know him all that well, but I don't think he goes home caring one bit about how many shots he took. I think if he had taken two, and they won, and played the way they played, he'd go home feeling just as good as the night that he scored 15."

"And to me, that's special. And that's what everybody's looking to have on their team. And then to see his improvement, because I did watch him a lot as a high school player - physical improvement. I give him a lot of credit."

Holtmann, who shared a story about how Young was homesick as a freshman, expressed how far the forward has come since arriving in Columbus. When asked about his favorite stat that Young records, Holtmann had a more precise answer than the talented junior.

"He's really about W's," Holtmann said of Young. "He's really about the final score."



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# December Schedule Gets Beefier, Tastier For OSU

Years and years ago when I was on the track team at Otterbein College (now University) in Westerville just outside of Columbus, we would spend our spring break in the South.

Which come to think of it, is one reason

## COURT REPORT Craig Merz

I ran track for Otterbein. The warm climate made for good training as we transitioned from winter into more (hopefully) springlike conditions by the last week of March.

The other reason for the trips was to compete in invitationals alongside athletes from schools at higher levels than Division III Otterbein.

It was at Florida State one year when our track coach turned to our standout hurdler, an All-American the previous year, and said, "Woody, when you come to Otterbein, you'll never go undefeated."

He wasn't disparaging our star's talent but instead was emphasizing his philosophy to go where the competition is. Indeed, Woody got beat by most, but not all, D-I hurdlers during our travels, but he still won by knowing that he was better for the experience.

As it relates to the Ohio State men's basketball team, the Buckeyes, who were ranked No. 10 at the time BSB was published and possibly moving up, don't have the talent gap that our track team faced during spring break, but the idea of seeking the best competition available is still the same.

That's why the Dec. 4 matchup at North Carolina is important. OSU is 7-0 after quality wins over Cincinnati and Villanova, a scare by Kent State and blowout wins against Massachusetts Lowell, Stetson, Purdue Fort Wayne and Morgan State.

The UNC game starts a testing stretch that includes the first two Big Ten games Dec. 7 at home vs. Penn State and at Minnesota on Dec. 15; Kentucky in Las Vegas on Dec. 21; and playing West Virginia in Cleveland on Dec. 29 to complete the nonconference schedule.

The lone softie in the bunch is hosting Southeast Missouri State on Dec. 17.

"We're heading into a stretch here that's the most challenging December I've ever been a part of," said OSU coach Chris Holtmann. "I think that we all will welcome that, but I'm interested to see what questions are answered coming out of this month."

The Buckeyes may not exit the first week of December unbeaten but that's OK, especially with the game at North Carolina being the first road contest.

"We will learn a lot about our team over the next few weeks," Holtmann said.

The game vs. the Tar Heels is part of the Big Ten/ACC Challenge so it wasn't Holtmann's idea, but he's embracing it nonetheless.

"It tests your togetherness, your toughness across the board," he said.

UNC is 6-1 after playing three games in the Battle 4 Atlantis tournament in the Bahamas. The No. 6 Tar Heels lost to Michigan (the tourney champion) but beat Alabama and No. 11 Oregon.

### Showing Flashes

The Buckeyes' final tuneup before traveling to Chapel Hill, N.C., was a 90-57 win over Morgan State on Nov. 29, but it was the Kent

State game four days earlier that provided the young Buckeyes with some learning moments.

Playing its once-a-season game in venerable St. John Arena, Ohio State let a 40-23 lead slip away when the Golden Flashes of the Mid-American Conference tied it at 48 midway through the second half.

That OSU would go on a 17-0 run and close out a 71-52 victory left Holtmann pleased with the result but happier by how it happened.

"To be honest with you, we needed a game like this," the third-year coach said. "(Kent State) was really tough and really physical. I think we expected that. I give our guys a lot of credit. It's a good win for us."

Kent State's mind-set as the underdog trying to knock off not only a Big Ten school but in-state rival could be of benefit to the Buckeyes when they face North Carolina, who by virtue of playing at home could be slightly favored.

Knocking off the Tar Heels would not be considered an upset, but there have been shockers throughout college basketball this season with Evansville winning at Kentucky and Stephen F. Austin stunning Duke, 85-83 in overtime on Nov. 26, to hand the Blue Devils their first nonconference loss at home since 2000.

SFA coach Kyle Keller told "The Dan Patrick Show" the next morning that his team, a 27½-point underdog, enjoyed the role because his school is considered the Duke of the Southland Conference.

In other words, the Lumberjacks go into every league game knowing their opponent is giving them their best shot. He told his players before the Duke game to think like those teams think when playing Stephen F. Austin.

The Buckeyes know the feeling of being hunted when playing a program such as Kent State. They were challenged by the Golden Flashes and responded.

"We're fighters," said sophomore guard Duane Washington Jr.

The Buckeyes head into the second phase of their season beginning at North Carolina with the mid-major schools, save one, behind them. They will be the favorite in some and picked to lose by the experts in others. Taking the experiences gained from staring down Kent State will be invaluable the rest of the way.

"We could have got wild and just came down chucking up shots after that trying to make hero plays," said sophomore guard Luther Muhammad, "but we stayed together and we just took it one possession at a time, defense first then offense."

### Lights Out

The biggest takeaway from the Morgan State game is that senior forward Andre Wesson may have found his shooting touch.

He got off to a rough start this season when he sustained an orbital fracture of the right eye in the Nov. 6 season opener vs. Cincinnati. He missed two games and entered the Morgan State tilt hitting 26.7 percent (4 of 15) of his three-point attempts. He rectified that against the Bears by making all four treys, his only shots from the floor, and going 7 for 7 from the free-throw line for a game-high 19 points in 20 minutes.

"I needed a few shots to drop, especially since lately they haven't been," Wesson said.

His breakout was a relief to the team as well. "That's our leader," freshman guard D.J. Carton said. "We look up to this guy, and when he's shooting the ball like that, when that shot's going down, he becomes a different threat."

## OSU Men's Basketball Verbal Commits

Players in the class of 2020 who have signed a letter of intent to play basketball at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the 247Sports composite rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Eugene Brown	SG	6-6	185	★★★★	Decatur (Ga.) Southwest DeKalb
Zed Key	PF	6-7	215	★★★	Glen Head (N.Y.) Long Island Lutheran

Players in the class of 2021 who have issued verbal commitments to play basketball 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	★★★★	Willoughby (Ohio) Andrew Osborne

Wesson lost his starter's spot when he was injured, and since his return, Holtmann has continued the starting five of guards Muhammad, Washington and C.J. Walker and forwards Kaleb Wesson and Kyle Young.

### The Late Show

Holtmann was asked after the Morgan State game why the tip-off was 9 p.m. on a

Friday night. You could guess the answer.

"We had no say over that," Holtmann said. "That's all TV. This is about, at this point I'm reading or I'm asleep or I'm winding down or I'm watching film or I'm kicking the dog out of the bed. This is late for me. We had no control over that."

By the way, the North Carolina game was scheduled for 9:30 p.m. on ESPN.

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# UConn Game Shows Potential Of Young Roster

The Ohio State women's basketball team came into the season as one of the most inexperienced in college basketball, with six of the 10 major contributors so far being freshmen, three being sophomores and the other being a junior transfer in her first season with the Buckeyes. That has meant some early growing

## DOUBLE DRIBBLE Wyatt Crosher

pains, including a home defeat against Ohio University and a 15-point loss to South Dakota in Las Vegas.

But on Nov. 24, the Buckeyes faced off against the No. 4 team – as well as the most prestigious women's basketball program – in the country in UConn, and they showed every bit of capability that they have.

Ohio State battled the Huskies in a back-and-forth game for much of the matchup, eventually falling 73-62. The 11-point margin was as large as it got all game, with the Buckeyes bringing it within six points late before UConn's Crystal Dangerfield took over, scoring the final six points for the Huskies to bury Ohio State's chances at the upset.

But even in the loss, there was plenty for a team with a majority of underclassmen to learn from coming so close to a monumental win.

"I thought we played hard and we com-

peted, and we gave ourselves a chance," said Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff. "Just down the stretch they made more plays than we did, and that was ultimately the difference in the game."

This was not the first game against the Huskies for three of the Buckeyes who saw playing time.

Last season, guard Janai Crooms and forwards Dorka Juhasz and Aaliyah Patty, all freshmen at the time, went up against UConn on Nov. 11, 2018, and went down 49-19 at half before losing 85-53 while shooting 29.3 percent from the field and committing 21 turnovers. In that game, the trio combined for nine points and six rebounds on 3-of-16 shooting, but Juhasz said comparing the two games is difficult considering the turnover in the rosters.

"Most of our players from last year left, so it's really just us sophomores and Jensen (Caretto)," Juhasz said. "It was a different team and everything, and we are young, so hopefully in the next few years we will feel like we are able to play against them, and hopefully we can catch the win."

Crooms had similar thoughts but also said the change in outcomes between the two UConn games shows the growth of the team from 2018 to now in terms of the roster that the Buckeyes are currently fielding.

"The talent, to be honest, is better than last year," Crooms said. "We have really good freshmen, Braxtin Miller from Oklahoma (State), so we just brought in a lot of good talent. I think that was the difference between last year and this year."

This time around, the Buckeyes still did not

shoot well, hitting 24 of their 68 attempts (35.3 percent) from the field and 9 of 30 from three (30.0), but they turned the ball over only 12 times while forcing 14 Husky turnovers.

UConn still managed to shoot 47.5 percent (29 of 61) and outrebounded Ohio State 43-37, but the statistics were much closer than the performances from these same two teams just a season ago.

Regardless, Crooms, as well as the rest of the team, sees that close performance as a major game to learn from and improve upon moving forward.

"We just try and learn from our mistakes," she said. "We saw that fourth quarter we weren't knocking down shots, so what are we going to do? We have to come in the gym, we are going to get extra shots up. I just always try to tell (the freshmen), 'Hey, everything's not going to go our way, we're going to face adversity. So we just have to stay together and just whatever happens, happens. We just have to be able to knock down shots when we need them.'"

As much as the Huskies game showed the potential that Ohio State holds, the next two games showed how inconsistent all that potential could be.

Against a veteran South Dakota team, the Buckeyes could not get the offense or the defense rolling in ways it had in prior games, and it resulted in a 15-point loss.

Then, on the second night of a back-to-back, Ohio State came out and thoroughly dominated Northern Iowa 64-46 while holding the Panthers to 23.0 percent shooting (14 of 61).

Both Northern Iowa and South Dakota received votes in the most recent polls, meaning both sat just outside the top 25, yet the Buckeyes put together completely different performances against the pair of teams.

"It's a tricky thing because you have to learn from what happened yesterday, so you can't totally just dismiss it, but at the same time we had to quickly move on," McGuff said following the win over Northern Iowa on Nov. 30, about how to recover from a loss. "I thought we did that."

Ohio State still has plenty of challenges left in this season, including one Dec. 5 against a

top-10 Louisville team that remains undefeated. But McGuff knows the difficult schedule can be a blessing in disguise down the line, especially for a team still learning about what it is.

"It always seems like a great idea in the offseason, and then when you're in it, you wonder how stupid you are to do this," McGuff said, laughing, of his scheduling. "We're going to learn a lot about ourselves and really expose where we have to get better."

"It's not easy, but you know what? I don't really want it to be easy. You don't ever get to anything great if you go through something easy."

## Miller Battles Shoulder Injury

Though she played in both games in Las Vegas, Miller struggled with a right shoulder injury that left her out of the starting lineup against South Dakota, giving the spot instead to freshman Jacy Sheldon, which was her first career collegiate start.

Miller still managed to play 30 minutes, but she did not find the bottom of the basket on three attempts and ended the game with a zero in the points column.

Then, the following night against Northern Iowa, Miller again was left scoreless in 20 minutes, this time going 0 for 7 including missing all three attempts from deep.

The 0-of-10 shooting for the tournament showed Miller's struggles, but McGuff doesn't expect the injury to be a long-term concern.

"She was a little worn out, but she played really hard defensively," McGuff said. "She did a lot of good things, even though she couldn't get her shots to fall."

Juhasz had also been battling an injury that left her out of the game against Kent State, but the sophomore forward played in the following three games for Ohio State, and she said on Nov. 27 that she felt much better than she did Nov. 24 against the Huskies.

"I feel way better than I felt for the UConn game," Juhasz said. "Obviously it showed that I wasn't really ready enough on offense, and I missed shots that I'm able to make. It was just hard not practicing for three or four days. I feel better and more healthy and just stronger."

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# Rutgers Rehires Schiano To Be Next Head Coach

Greg Schiano is returning to Rutgers as the program's head football coach. Rutgers released a short statement from athletic director Pat Hobbs on Dec. 1, confirming late-night reports that the school had rehired Schiano.

"The next great chapter for Rutgers Football is about to begin," Hobbs stated. "There are many people to thank for where we are today, particularly Coach Schiano and his team, as well as everyone here at Rutgers. They all played important roles in bringing these complex negotiations to a close."

## BIG TEN NOTES Joe Dempsey

"It wouldn't be appropriate to prejudice any action that the Board of Governors may take, but I believe today that Rutgers Football is on the path to greatness."

The contract has been reported as an eight-year, \$32-million deal with \$25.2 million guaranteed, according to The Athletic.

The Scarlet Knights will need a complete turnaround to be competitive again, as they were during Schiano's first stint, following a 2-10 season when they went winless in the Big Ten.

Schiano's first stint in Piscataway, N.J., rejuvenated a woeful program and brought it to national prominence. From 2001-2011, Rutgers went 68-67 with Schiano at the helm, with five straight winning seasons and bowl games in six out of his last seven years.

The first stint for Schiano was highlighted by an 11-2 campaign in 2006, when Rutgers finished No. 12 in the polls at 11-2 after a 37-10 win in the Texas Bowl against Kansas State.

Schiano initially left Piscataway to take the head coaching job for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, where he went 11-21. Then he served as Urban Meyer's defensive coordinator for three years at Ohio State.

He was expected to join Bill Belichick as the New England Patriots' defensive coordinator, but Schiano unexpectedly resigned

from New England on March 28, citing a desire to spend more time on his "faith and family."

### Rutgers' Sitkowski, Robinson Enter NCAA Transfer Portal

Prior to the official announcement that Schiano would become the head football coach at Rutgers, sophomore quarterback Artur Sitkowski and sophomore tight end Daevon Robinson, who represent two of Rutgers' top recruits in recent years, entered the NCAA transfer portal.

Freshman defensive end Malachi Burby also entered the portal, bringing the number of Rutgers players known to be in the portal to 11 dating back to the firing of former head coach Chris Ash on Sept. 29.

Players who enter the NCAA portal can opt to stay at Rutgers. But by placing their name in the portal, they are allowed to be contacted by other schools.

Sitkowski, an Old Bridge, N.J., native, struggled as the Scarlet Knights' starting quarterback as a true freshman, tying for the most interceptions in the nation with 18 in 11 games. As a sophomore, Sitkowski lost a position battle to Texas Tech graduate transfer McLane Carter in the summer, at which point Ash said Sitkowski would ideally redshirt for 2019.

Carter suffered a career-ending concussion in Rutgers' second game of the year on Sept. 7, so Sitkowski played the second half of that game and then started in losses to Boston College and Michigan the next two weeks. Against Boston College, Sitkowski had what was likely the best game of his young career, completing 23 of 33 passes for 304 yards and one touchdown with one interception.

However, after Ash and offensive coordinator John McNulty were fired on Sept. 29 following the loss to Michigan, Sitkowski decided to voluntarily redshirt due to the uncertainty around the program and his discomfort with interim head coach Nunzio Campanile's plans for the offense. Redshirt freshman signal caller Johnny Langan finished the season as the Scarlet Knights' starter.

Robinson was a coveted recruit out of Medford (N.J.) Shawnee, who initially com-

mitted to N.C. State but flipped to Rutgers right before the early signing day in 2017. He enrolled early at Rutgers and played tight end in 2018, appearing in all 12 games with four starts.

Rutgers then moved Robinson to wide receiver after his freshman campaign. While he excelled during spring and summer practices, he did not get off to a fast start once the regular season began and was moved back to tight end around the time Ash was fired.

### Schlereth, Watt Earn Leadership, Humanitarian Awards

Indiana's Doug Schlereth is this year's recipient of the Big Ten's Ford-Kinnick Leadership Award, while Wisconsin's J.J. Watt is the Dungy-Thompson Humanitarian Award honoree. The awards recognize Big Ten football student-athletes who have achieved success in the areas of leadership and humanitarianism following their academic and athletic careers at a Big Ten university.

Schlereth was a four-year letter winner as a defensive lineman at Indiana from 1985-88, where he started in three bowl games for the Hoosiers, including the All-American Bowl (1986), Peach Bowl (1988) and Liberty Bowl (1988). He concluded his career with 138 total tackles, 10 tackles for loss and five fumble recoveries.

Schlereth was commissioned through Federal Officer Candidate School in 1990 upon graduating from Indiana. He most recently served as Structure and Analysis Staff Officer at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., where he retired with 29 years of military service on Sept. 1.

His extensive list of military awards and decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Joint Meritorious Unit Award, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Korea Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Southwest Asia Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon and NATO Medal.

Schlereth had four combat tours which included one in Saudi Arabia after the Gulf War, two tours in Afghanistan and one in Kuwait.

Watt earned two letters as a defensive end for Wisconsin from 2008-10. The Pewaukee,

## BIG 2019 Standings

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
<b>Ohio State</b>	9	0	1.000	12	0	1.000
Penn State	7	2	.778	10	2	.833
Michigan	6	3	.667	9	3	.750
Indiana	5	4	.556	8	4	.667
Michigan State	4	5	.444	6	6	.500
Maryland	1	8	.111	3	9	.250
Rutgers	0	9	.000	2	10	.167

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Wisconsin	7	2	.778	10	2	.833
Minnesota	7	2	.778	10	2	.833
Iowa	6	3	.667	9	3	.750
Illinois	4	5	.444	6	6	.500
Nebraska	3	6	.333	5	7	.417
Purdue	3	6	.333	4	8	.333
Northwestern	1	8	.111	3	9	.250

**Nov. 29 Score**  
Iowa 27, Nebraska 24

**Nov. 30 Scores**  
**Ohio State 56, Michigan 27**  
Indiana 44, Purdue 41 (2OT)  
Northwestern 29, Illinois 10  
Michigan State 19, Maryland 16  
Penn State 27, Rutgers 6  
Wisconsin 38, Minnesota 17

**Dec. 7 Game**  
**Ohio State vs. Wisconsin, 8 p.m.**

Wis., native earned All-America and first-team All-Big Ten honors in 2010, in addition to winning the 2010 Lott IMPACT Trophy.

The two-time Academic All-Big Ten honoree also played a pivotal role in helping the Badgers win a share of the Big Ten championship in 2010 and winning the 2009 Champs Sports Bowl.

With a desire to help underprivileged children, Watt started the Justin J. Watt Foundation in Wisconsin in 2010. His personal motto of "Dream Big, Work Hard" culminated into a mission that he continues to use to impact communities nationwide.

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# Snowden's Hope To Play Finally Comes True

For the first 713 minutes, 59 seconds of his Ohio State career, freshman goalie Ryan Snowden was on the bench studying the game and occasionally opening the door for line shifts during breaks in the action.

## IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

He watched as Tommy Nappier, the 2019 Big Ten Goaltender of the Year and semifinalist for the Mike Richter Award as the nation's best college goalie, played every game this fall for the No. 11 Buckeyes, compiling a 6-4-1 record with a 2.13 goals-against average.

All that changed between the second and third periods at Pegula Ice Arena in University Park, Pa., on Nov. 23.

The Buckeyes and Penn State were tied 3-3, and it was crunch time for Ohio State, which had lost three straight one-goal games. Nappier was injured toward the end of the second period, and his status for the ensuing 20 minutes was unknown as the Buckeyes headed to the locker room.

"Halfway through the intermission I got the word that Tommy was going to be going out and I was going in," Snowden said. "I was pretty nervous, I'm not going to lie, but the guys in the locker room were great. Everybody was supportive and had my back."

To say he did well in his college debut would be an understatement. Snowden stopped all 15 shots against the second-highest scoring team in the nation (4.82 goals/game) and earned a 4-3 victory against the sixth-ranked Nittany Lions when sophomore Gustaf Westlund scored with 6:56 left in regulation.

"The thing I liked most is our team, they almost came together more than I've seen all year, from in the locker room – with (Nappier) going out and Snows going in – to the energy we had on the bench,"

coach Steve Rohlik said. "Everybody decided they wanted to do this thing together. They believe in Snowden."

"It's good for your chemistry. When I talk about 27 guys, we need everybody. You just see the 20 guys who are out there, but you don't realize when your number's called like that and you go out and have success, it shows you're speaking the truth."

Yet Rohlik admitted that he wasn't sure how Snowden would react to the situation with little time to prepare.

"That's just a natural thing to wonder," Rohlik said. "Everybody wants to know, including us. But we see it every day how hard he works. I was just excited for him."

"If you can play like he did in an environment like that, you tip your hat to him and our team."

Snowden's first game was even more significant because his mother, sister and a cousin were there. Snowden is from Lincoln University, Pa., about two hours from Penn State. It was quite the moment when he went on the ice and to the net to get ready for the third period.

"They were shocked," Snowden said. "I knew where they were sitting. They were to my left, first row. It was a great experience."

"They saw me skating out, my mom's jaw was ... wide. My mom was super excited. My sister and cousin were extremely happy. Having them there in that moment was even more special."

He thought that not having time to dwell on it was beneficial.

"There's definitely truth to that," he said. "Instincts kick in rather than if you have 24 hours to think about it like, 'Here we go, first game, first game.' Now, it's like I've got to go step in and play."

Asked if he allowed himself to dream about his first appearance while he waited his turn, he said, "I didn't want to have an outcome in my head be different than what it was. I prepared for anything, whether it's to start a game or come into a game. I'm glad it happened the way it did."

"As soon as I went on the ice, all the nerves went away. I just realized I've been playing hockey my whole life. I've got an

amazing group of guys out there in front of me. They're going to pull through and win this game. It was incredible."

His teammates rallied around him. "We played a good third period," said freshman defenseman Layton Ahac. "We played well defensively, but he made some really huge saves, some big-time saves in the final minute."

Westlund's go-ahead goal was critical. "It's a mental thing, 'You have the lead, now we can protect it,'" Snowden said. "Once we had the lead, I had a really good feeling about it."

"The team didn't give them any grade-A chances, which was amazing. As soon as (the game) ended it was almost like a relief. All the nerves that were still there, kind of chillin', they were gone."

Prior to OSU, Snowden spent the past two seasons in the United States Hockey League, the top junior conference in the country. He played 28 games with the Central Illinois Flying Aces in 2018-19 with a 3.34 GAA and .898 save percentage. The previous season he was with Des Moines and Central Illinois for a combined 37 games.

### Command Performance

With Nappier still unavailable for the first game of the series vs. Michigan State on Nov. 30 at Value City Arena, Snowden made his first start a successful one for a 3-1 victory when he came within 4:49 of shutting out the Spartans.

"There's always a little bit of nerves having your first college start, junior start, whatever it may be," he said. "The guys in the locker room were awesome. They really helped me calm down."

He made 26 saves, including 11 each in the second and third periods.

"When (Nappier) goes down, we have Snowden stepping up, we know we have another good goalie there behind us doing his part," said senior captain Ronnie Hein, who scored twice. "It makes us a lot more comfortable. If we do have a breakdown, he's back there to help us out and bail us out."

The Buckeyes were leading 2-0 when a bad bounce resulted in his first goal allowed.

He mishandled the puck around the net, and as he scrambled back to the crease, Mitch Lewandowski banked in a goal off him.

Hein said he could tell his young net-minder was not shaken.

"There's nothing I really had to say to him except, 'You're good. You've been playing stellar all night and you have one bounce like that,'" he said. "We weren't worried about it."

Hein scored an empty-netter with eight seconds to play for the final margin.

Nappier returned for the second game vs. the Spartans (6-7-1, 4-3-1 Big Ten) on Dec. 1 and made 23 saves for the Buckeyes in a 2-0 victory.

Senior Tanner Laczynski scored his fifth goal at 13:14 of the first, and Ohio State (9-4-1, 5-3-0) iced its third straight win when senior Gordi Myer scored into an empty net with 36 seconds left in the game as Hein picked up the assist.

### No Sophomore Slump

Westlund had his freshman season disrupted by injuries but still had points in 13 of his final 21 games. He missed nine games and had 19 points (five goals, 14 assists) in 25 games.

He already has eight goals in 13 games this season, including one in the first game vs. Michigan State, as well as six assists.

"Having the injuries last year and coming back and having the confidence to do the things he can do is the big thing," Rohlik said. "He continues to grow. He's got a long way to go, which is exciting. I really believe he is just scratching the surface to what he can be. His skill set is as good as anybody's."

### Next

The Buckeyes host Minnesota (5-8-3, 2-3-5) at 8 p.m. Dec. 6 and 7.

OSU will then be off until a two-game non-conference series against Colgate on Dec. 27 (7 p.m.) and 28 (5 p.m.) at Value City Arena.

For a complete recap of Ohio State's series against Michigan State, go to BSB's [BuckeyeSports.com](http://BuckeyeSports.com) website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



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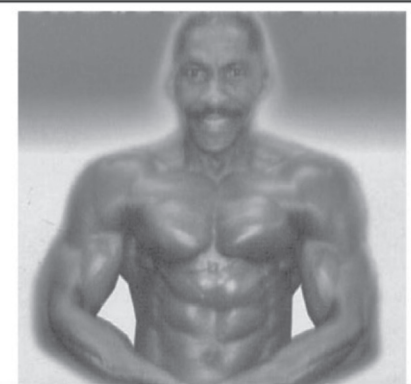
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# Freshmen Lead OSU

By PATRICK MAYHORN  
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

Ohio State's women's volleyball team has fought through a tumultuous stretch in the two years since it made a run to the regional finals in the NCAA tournament in 2016, off a 22-13 season. A 15-16 campaign in 2017 and a 12-20 cratering in 2018 kept the Buckeyes out of the tournament, as nearly the entire program turned over following that 2016 tournament run.

That wasn't necessarily unexpected. After three straight tournament berths from 2014-2016, the Buckeyes were due for some turnover, given its status as one of the nation's more experienced teams in each of those runs. 2017 saw that turnover strike, as did 2018. The 2019 season for head coach Geoff Carlston has been a similar story to each of the last two, with the Buckeyes putting up a 15-17 record against one of the hardest schedules in the country, while fielding a largely inexperienced roster.

In fact, an argument could be made that this edition of the Buckeyes is the youngest yet, with 10 underclassmen (six true freshmen) to just nine upperclassmen. That has created some familiar struggles with the Buckeyes in the Big Ten, a conference loaded from front to back with top tier talent, led by the No. 5, 6, 7, 8, 16, 22 and 24 teams. Because of that familiarity, Ohio State has a plan to stay on track.

"In the Big Ten, you don't have time, it's one of the good things and one of the bad things is that you don't have a lot of time to dwell," Carlston told BSB. "So what we do every Monday is we get together, it's a bit of a new tradition, we get together in the locker room, we reflect on how the weekend went, we have our players recognize each other for small things, little things that we know are going to be important for us. We kind of track where we are and the landscape, how'd the weekend go, and then, boom, we're done. We let that one go, no matter what, and then focus on the week to come."

So far, that approach has kept the Buckeyes from any serious drop off. Despite an intense conference schedule, Ohio State was able to finish 8-12 in the Big Ten, behind only the seven teams ranked in the top 25. On top of that, Ohio State's ability to move forward played a key role in its upset win over then-No. 4 Wisconsin, 3-1 on Nov. 8. Still, it's been an up-and-down year for the Buckeyes. They've struggled to string together wins, which Carlston attributes to a lack of experience.

"In the Big Ten, and when you look at the top teams in the country, those top teams are older," Carlston said. "Naturally. You're going to always have some freshman that stand out, and I think we've got a good mix here and good leadership, so really it's about, well, a lot of our players have never been through a lot of stuff."

"A lot of our players have never won against a top four team, like Wisconsin. They've never lost, when you have match point like we did against Minnesota. There's a lot of firsts that are happening. As a fall sport, you're going through the fire. Now, the good thing about that is that you're gaining experience. Throughout the year you're gaining experience. It's a battle just mentally, emotionally, trying to keep our team in a good space. And you're trying to do it against the best conference in the country, so there's no break, there's no easy matches."

Somewhat unlike in those recent years where the Buckeyes have faced similar struggles, this season's team has been buoyed not just by the few veterans it has, but by freshmen. Maryland native Jenaisya Moore, and Georgia product Gabby Gonzales, both outside hitters, have served not just as bright spots, but as leaders for the Buckeyes. The two lead the team in points with 301 and 209, respectively, and have stepped right into starring roles just months removed from high school. Both players cited the team focus around staying grounded as key to their success.

"The mental aspect of balancing everything like volleyball, school, social life," Moore told BSB about her largest hurdle from high school to college. "As far as volleyball, I think just keeping my confidence, knowing I'm a freshman and I may make more mistakes than a senior or a junior and just staying confident and trusting that 'I'm here, and I made it' and just trusting my process and trusting my skills."

Gonzales, who sits among the leaders Big Ten in kills on the season with Moore closely behind, echoes a similar sentiment.

"Something that's helped me a lot is the teammates," Gonzales said, "and just having them to rely back on has just helped me a lot through the really tough times and the really good times too."

Despite an effort to take things game by game and "focus on the present" Ohio State's star freshmen can't help but drift into optimism when asked about their futures in Columbus.

"Oh, really anything," Moore said on what the class can accomplish at Ohio State. "With our class, our incoming class, people we have here now, I see the potential in everyone that we can win a championship, and I definitely believe that."

"I think that we have really great potential, it's just, we have to really use that to our advantage," Gonzales said. "I'm just so grateful to be surrounded by such a great group of girls, and I think we can accomplish anything just like Jen said."

While their excitement could come off as youthful exuberance, the veteran members of the team see a similar fate for the newest stars in Columbus. In fact, some may even see a brighter future than Moore and Gonzales can imagine.

"Oh, hands down," senior Elle Sandbothe said when asked if the sky is the limit for her freshmen teammates. "They have the brightest futures ahead of them. They are going to do really, really cool things for this program, and they already have. I have no doubts that they're going to just continue to excel and grow and break records."

For now, however, that potential is just that: potential. As Carlston put it, the team was put into the fire this season. That will no longer be the case in 2020, for what looks to be one of the most encouraging young groups in the country. In 2019, however, the Buckeyes had to take their lumps.

"That's the problem with experience," Carlston said, chuckling. "You have to go through it."

*In order to better introduce BSB readers to Ohio State's Olympic sports teams and athletes, we have shifted to more featured-oriented coverage of the various squads. Buckeye Sports Bulletin will provide a roundup of all games, matches and meets involving OSU's teams each Monday on our BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all print subscribers.*



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# Day And Buckeye Squad Deliver In Ann Arbor

A lot of talk was going on before "The Game" about the pressure that was on Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh to defeat the Buckeyes. He had lost four straight to the Wolverines' archrivals. After all, he was supposed to be the savior for a program that had struggled under its last two coaches, Brady Hoke and Rich Rodriguez.

## COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

Harbaugh was the same guy who, as a player at quarterback for Michigan, had promised to deliver a victory over Ohio State and take his team to the Rose Bowl back in 1986. He did exactly that, and even though the Wolverines lost to Arizona State 22-15 in that game, he used that win in Columbus over three decades ago as bragging rights over the Buckeyes for the rest of his life and a reason he could also be successful over those archrivals as the head coach at Michigan.

Fast-forward from when he was hired in 2015, and the reality is much more shocking to Michigan fans than they could imagine. Harbaugh not only hasn't beaten Ohio State, but his defense has given up 118 points in the last two games against the Buckeyes. That is both unacceptable and embarrassing to a coach with the ego of Jim Harbaugh.

What happens to Jim Harbaugh in relation to his tenure at Michigan is uncertain at this point. He probably has won enough games to

keep his job, but the heat he is going to receive from Wolverine fans, the media, and alums will be tremendous. What makes things even worse for Harbaugh this year is the fact he lost two of his coaches to Ohio State in the offseason and they returned to the "Big House" and beat him. In actuality, it would probably be tough for him to get a ride home if his car broke down in Ann Arbor. He might decide his best fit in the profession would be to return to the professional ranks.

One thing is for certain, the leash on his coaching security at Michigan is getting shorter and shorter, and even if he has the option to stay at his alma mater, it's a long time till next November.

### Day Responds

A different type of pressure was on Ryan Day going into the 2019 game than Jim Harbaugh faced. After all, Day had already achieved much more than anyone had ever expected from the first-year head coach. Win or lose, the Buckeyes were still Big Ten East champions, going to play for the conference title and, with just one more win, make it to the final four of the college playoffs. Two more victories would assure Day of the number one ranking in the country come selection time.

The pressure on Day going into the Michigan game was all self-inflicted, and understandably so. After all, his mentor had won seven in a row against the Wolverines, and now he was calling the shots. Could he keep the winning streak alive at one of the rowdiest places to play and, most importantly, could he beat a guy who had many more years of head-coaching experience in the head-to-head battle? Few Buckeye loyal-

ists would have lost faith in Day if he didn't win, but the competitive nature of Ryan Day wouldn't allow it. In a cool and confident manner, he went about his business on the sidelines on Saturday in Ann Arbor, but his insides were churning like crazy. The sweet victory over Michigan was reason to celebrate, but for Ryan Day, it was also the reason to give a big sigh of relief.

### Defense Responds

Michigan believed it had an offense that could put up points, a lot of points, against the Buckeyes this year. The Wolverines had destroyed their last four opposing defenses by putting up 166 points, and Shea Patterson was finally coming into his own at quarterback. Patterson also had at his disposal three big-play wide receivers in Ronnie Bell, Donovan Peoples-Jones and Nico Collins. Patterson had thrown for over 300 yards and nine touchdowns in the last two games, and there was no reason to think the Wolverine offense that had hit its stride was going to slow down against the Buckeyes, as long as they could neutralize defensive end Chase Young.

The Wolverines offense did seem unstoppable early in the first half by putting up 13 first-quarter points. Even though the Michigan defense couldn't stop Justin Fields and company, it looked as if the game might boil down to an offensive shootout in the "Big House." The rivalry that in decades past had been characteristically a hard-hitting, low-scoring, all-out war had seemed to change to one of finesse and big plays. But with the Buckeyes taking a 28-16 lead into the locker room at half, the second half would tell a different tale, at least for the Wolverine offense.

The Buckeye defense that had allowed 285 yards in the first half turned it up a several notches in the second. Patterson, who was having a field day early, was now getting pressured by the Buckeye defensive front unmercifully. Even though Chase Young wasn't putting up big numbers statistically, he was turning outside runs and sprint-outs back inside to his teammates along with forcing Patterson to release the ball early on dropback passes.

To complement the play of the Buckeye defensive line, the secondary which had been shredded earlier in the day, had made the necessary adjustments. Buckeye coverage tightened and those receivers in maize and blue were now getting black and blue from punishing hits from the "Silver Bullets." Those same Michigan receivers were getting gun shy by the fourth quarter as they started short-arming passes thrown to them. Patterson completed only 4 of 24 passes in the second half and ended the day converting only 2 of 13 third-down attempts.

### Dobbins, Fields Show Toughness

It is one thing to rush or throw for a bunch of yards, but to do it time after time and play after play while taking huge hits is not for the faint of heart. J.K. Dobbins has proved to be one of the best running backs, if not the very best, in the country. He not only puts up the numbers but

has great vision when making quick and accelerating cuts through the line of scrimmage. He is a powerful runner who carries defenders with him to get positive yards after first contact. Dobbins is elusive in the open field and turns on the jets to speed past defenders in space. He is a complete back who has soft hands and can catch the ball out of the backfield.

What makes him special is his toughness. He takes a lot of shots during the game, but he also delivers a bunch himself. Michigan defenders respected him so much they were even trying to take his cleats off his feet just to get him out for a couple of plays. You will not be able to speak about the great running backs in Ohio State history without mentioning Dobbins.

Fields has shown maturity beyond his years at quarterback. Again, against Michigan, he displayed his arm strength and accuracy by throwing four touchdown strikes. His ability to deliver the deep ball was demonstrated by connecting on passes of 57, 47 and 41 yards. The play of the day, however, was a 30-yarder to Garrett Wilson when coming back on the field after getting his leg rolled up just a few plays prior. Like Dobbins, Fields has taken a ton of hits this season, but he still delivers the football with pressure in his face and heat coming from his back side. His ability to extend plays and keep drives alive is extremely rare for a first-year starting quarterback.

Joe Burrow might win the Heisman Trophy this year, but the Buckeyes wouldn't trade Fields for any quarterback in the nation.

### Badger Replay

Wisconsin sank P.J. Fleck's boat in the snow in Minneapolis on Nov. 30. Despite having some gifted skilled athletes for the Gophers, the more physical team won the game. It's always tough to beat the same team twice in one season, but if the Bucks want to secure their number one spot in the college playoffs and win the Big Ten championship, that is exactly what they have to do in Indianapolis. Like the Buckeyes, the Badgers have strength and athleticism up front on both sides of the football.

Ohio State, again, must stop the running of Jonathan Taylor along with the play-action passing attack of Wisconsin. The Badgers must find a way to stop the most balanced offensive attack in the country. Ohio State averages 280.6 yards per game rushing and 253.7 passing. To beat Ohio State, Wisconsin must defend the entire field and shut down a plethora of skilled talent the Buckeyes possess. That's a task no one has been able to accomplish all season. At the same time, the Buckeyes cannot take a wounded Badger lightly. They're a very dangerous animal.

*Known as one of the top recruiters in college football, Bill Conley was a national championship-winning coach and player at Ohio State who suited up for Woody Hayes and spent 17 years on the staffs of Earle Bruce, John Cooper and Jim Tressel. His column will appear throughout the season in BSB.*



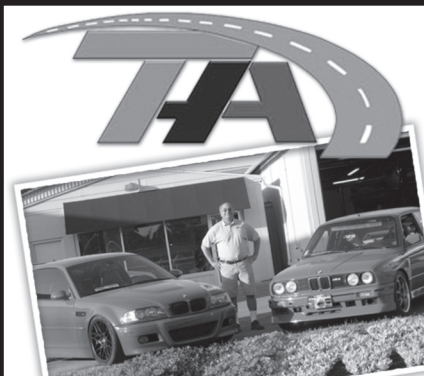
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# Talent Gap Widens Between Haves, Have-Nots

If there was ever a loss for which to give Jim Harbaugh a break, it was this year's Ohio State-Michigan game, even if the scoreboard read a lopsided 56-27 in favor of the Buckeyes at the end.

Harbaugh's Michigan team wasn't bad; it just ran into perhaps the most talented and deep Ohio State football team in the post-Woody Hayes era of 41 seasons.

## EXNER POINT Rich Exner

Ohio State's eighth straight victory over Michigan was the product of what seems to be a widening gap between the haves and have nots of college football. The talent gap between the top few – Alabama, Ohio State and maybe Clemson – appears to be as wide as ever to the next grouping of good teams. No, this doesn't mean that these teams packed with future NFL talent deep on their rosters will win every game. But it means they are working from a huge advantage.

LSU likely would not be in the running for a national title if it were not for the phenomenal play of Joe Burrow. But the Burrow example drives home a couple of points.

It has taken exceptional play from a single player – Burrow – to lift LSU from SEC challenger to SEC favorite. And he ended up at LSU because he was considered by the OSU coaches to be the second-best quarterback on the OSU roster behind Dwayne Haskins. (Of course, Justin Fields ended up at OSU after being beat out at Georgia, but at OSU he's just the latest in a string of winning quarterbacks.)

Maybe it's just happenstance that so much of the top talent is going to a few schools, unusual for the era of stricter scholarship limits than what once existed. But I tend to think that it is part of the fallout from the new four-team playoff format.

Interest in the other bowls has fallen off because of the playoffs. And merely winning

or playing for a league championship doesn't grab as much attention as in the "old" days. The talk of the season from start to finish is centered on the playoffs – and for the playoff era that largely has meant just a few teams. That helps recruiting for the regular playoff teams as players chase high-profile, high-success situations.

What we've had is only three champions in the first five years of the playoffs – Alabama, Clemson and Ohio State. This will be the first playoff without Alabama, after five straight appearances. Clemson has been to the playoff four times. This will be Ohio State's third appearance, but the Buckeyes are annually in the conversation. Oklahoma is the only other school with three appearances, maybe a fourth this year.

No other school has made it to the playoffs more than once.

The three times Ohio State hasn't made the playoffs, OSU went on to win its bowl games – 44-28 over Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl after the 2015 season, 24-7 over USC in the Cotton Bowl after the 2017 season and 28-23 over Washington in the Rose Bowl last season – again demonstrating a talent advantage over the next tier.

Alabama and Ohio State started the playoff era with a recruiting advantage from their coaches and previous success and expanded it through the playoffs.

It's possible that someone else will win a title this year. But honest fans of any team, LSU included, would admit that they would like to avoid Ohio State and Clemson in the first round.

### Numbers Behind Roster Depth

So, is the talent gap real or fiction?

To get an idea, I didn't look at projections tied to how many four- or five-star recruits each team signed. Rather, I wanted to know the depth and numbers produced for the NFL – figuring that was a better barometer than projections based on high school play and reputations.

I looked at the five drafts following the first five playoffs.

Alabama (with 46 draft picks) and Ohio State (40) easily lead the rest. Clemson is tied

for fourth with 29. Michigan is tied for ninth with 24.

More importantly than ranking one, two, three and so on, notice the drop-off. Alabama and Ohio State are well ahead. Michigan isn't too shabby in ranking ninth, but notice the difference between ninth (24 players) and first (46).

But that only tells part of the story. Those are the number of players, without considering how many really good players were drafted. So I weighted each pick. There were as many as 256 picks in the recent drafts; so I gave the first overall pick 256 points, the second 255 and so on down to one point for pick Number 256.

Here, the difference really shows up. Alabama is first with 7,834 points, Ohio State second with 7,150 points, Florida third with 4,874, Clemson fourth with 4,394 and Oklahoma fifth with 3,884. The drop after Alabama and Ohio State speaks to both the depth and talent level that has passed through each school. Michigan is high nationally, eighth with 3,802 points, but that score is only about half as high as the top.

Here's how this has flushed out over just the last two drafts. For total picks, Alabama leads with 22, Ohio State is second with 16, Clemson tied for 15th with nine and Michigan tied for 21st with seven. Using my point system, Alabama (3,262) and Ohio State (2,713) have a solid lead over most of the rest – Oklahoma (1,975), Georgia (1,934) and Washington (1,873). Clemson was 10th with 1,501 points and Michigan 14th at 1,243 points.

What might appear to be unexplained by my rating theory is Clemson, despite two national championships. Perhaps that will change as more recent Clemson recruits become eligible for the draft. And/or perhaps Clemson has been positioned to get to the playoffs more often (thus having more chances) because of the weak competition in the ACC.

Regardless, overall, I think this illustrates the gap between the top two or three teams, and the next groupings.

### 2019 Vs. 1973 Heisman Vote

Ohio State might very well have three of the top five Heisman vote recipients this year. This is early-1970s, Archie Griffin-era type of stuff.

In 1973, when Griffin was a sophomore, the Buckeyes had three of the top six Heisman vote-getters. Penn State running back John Capelletti won the 1973 Heisman. Second in the voting was Buckeye offensive lineman John Hicks. Griffin finished fifth, and sixth was OSU linebacker Randy Gradishar.

I went through each Heisman vote since 2000 and could find no time when a school had three players in the top 10.

Only five times since 2000 has a school had two players in the top six – Oklahoma's Baker Mayfield (third) and Dede Westbrook (fourth) in 2016; Texas Tech's Graham Harrell (fourth) and Michael Crabtree (fifth) in 2008; USC's Matt Leinart (first) and Reggie Bush (fifth) in 2004; Bush (first) and Leinart (third) in 2005; and Oklahoma's Adrian Peterson (second) and Jason White (third) in 2004.

As for Ohio State, Griffin was the only OSU player in the top 10 of voting in winning the Heisman in 1974 and 1975. When Eddie George won the Heisman in 1995, quarterback Bobby Hoying was 10th. Troy Smith was the only Buckeye in the top 10 when he won the 2006 Heisman.

Expect the top 10 this year to include Ohio State's Fields, J.K. Dobbins and Chase Young.

### Easy Victories

Ohio State heads to the Big Ten title game with an average winning margin of 38.1 points per game (599-142).

The next closest margins in Ohio State history are by the 1916 Buckeyes, who outscored their opponents by an average of 32.78 points, and the 1969 Buckeyes, who had a margin of 32.3.

The best point spread during Urban Meyer's seven years was 23.9 points a game in 2016.

At 49.9 points per game to date, this is the highest-scoring team in OSU history. Four of the current top five years for scoring were under Urban Meyer, with the exception being 1969. The top five are 2013 (45.5 ppg), 2014 (44.8), 1969 (42.6), 2018 (42.4) and 2016 (39.4).

### Rushing Record For Dobbins?

Dobbins, OSU's No. 2 rusher for career yards behind Griffin, could set a single-season record. With 1,657 yards to date, Dobbins is on pace to run for 1,933 yards in 14 games or 2,071 should OSU make it to the national title game, which would be the 15th game of the year.

George holds the OSU record with 1,927 yards in 1995. Ezekiel Elliott is second and third with 1,878 yards in 2014 and 1,821 yards in 2015.

Dobbins, of course, does benefit from the longer season. Dobbins is averaging 138.1 yards a game this season.

Five times a Buckeye has averaged at least 140: George in 1995 (148.2), Keith Byars in 1984 (147.0), Griffin in 1973 (143.4), Griffin in 1974 (141.3) and Elliott in 2015 (140.1).

### Domination Started With Tressel

Since Ohio State hired Jim Tressel in 2001, the Buckeyes are 210-38 overall and 134-24 in the Big Ten. Next best among Big Ten teams is Wisconsin at 179-71 overall and 104-53 in the league.

For overall record, Penn State is third at 158-81, just ahead of Michigan at 157-83. But for Big Ten record, Michigan is better at 100-56 to Penn State's 95-61.

### My Top 10

1. Ohio State (12-0) – The choice is easy considering the Buckeyes have not been in a game decided by single digits.

2. LSU (12-0) – The Tigers are very good on offense, but will their defense perform when needed, a defense that has had games this year yielding 41, 38, 38 and 37 points?

3. Clemson (12-0) – Untested and untested.

4. Georgia (11-1) – Bulldogs finished regular season strong heading into SEC title game, but how did Georgia lose to South Carolina?

5. Oklahoma (11-1) – Tough call over Utah, but giving the Sooners the edge for now.

6. Utah (11-1) – We'll find out more about this team in the Pac-12 title game against Oregon.

7. Baylor (11-1) – Still open-minded on Baylor if the Bears can win their rematch with the Sooners.

8. Wisconsin (10-2) – Among the two-loss teams to consider here, the Badgers with their convincing win over Minnesota have the best late-season win.

9. Oregon (10-2) – This team has a good shot to win the Pac-12.

10. Penn State (10-2) – The choice of PSU or Alabama comes down to quality wins, and Alabama has none.

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# Michigan Shows It's Still A Work In Progress

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

Several times throughout this season I've recapped in this space what my feelings were heading into particular games, sometimes expressing concern about particular opponents (mostly early in the season). Heading into The Game, I must say I seemed a lot less concerned than many Buckeye fans and certainly the pundits, who were making Michigan out to be vastly improved and now a juggernaut to be feared.

Those who think I am patting myself on the back with the benefit of having seen the Buckeyes' 56-27 victory should note that I made my beliefs known on our BuckeyeSports.com Forum before the game. To make any prediction, let alone a bold prediction for The Game, is really unlike me, so I must have been supremely confident. Oh, I acknowledged that funny things happen in the Ohio State-Michigan game. And speaking about funny things happening in The Game, I referenced that it was the 50th anniversary of Michigan's upset of one of the greatest Buckeye teams ever in 1969, Be Schembechler's first year on the U-M sidelines, a cautionary tale for the Buckeyes and their fans.

But I looked at both sides of the coin.

First, Michigan. I've got to make a confession. I probably had seen only a handful of Michigan plays all season, and now that I look back on it, those plays were against Army and Penn State, not the team's finest moments. But this team that was so vastly improved down the stretch – according to others, not me – was the same team that barely beat Army and lost to quality opponents Wisconsin and the Nittany Lions.

While I will give them their signature win of the season against Notre Dame, most of the street cred they gained in the last few weeks was against the likes of Michigan State, Maryland and Indiana. When the toughest team you beat in that stretch is the Hoosiers, you are going to have to show me a little more to sway me.

And as far as pulling off a 1969-esque upset, with all due respect, Jim Harbaugh is hardly Bo Schembechler.

More importantly than looking at Michigan's side of the coin, I looked at Ohio State's side, and the Buckeyes are a team that I am obviously very familiar with. No watching a few plays here or there with the Buckeyes.

I have said this over and over again since Ohio State started emerging in the early part of the season. This team is talented, deep, well-coached and focused, and it has a chemistry that I have always seen in the championship teams I have watched or been associated with.

I also was far less concerned than most following Ohio State's 28-17 win over Penn State. The Lions challenged briefly in the third period of that game, but the Buckeyes quickly righted the ship and scored an 11-point victory over a legitimate top-10 opponent in a game that was only that close because of several Buckeye turnovers. I was not minimizing the turnovers, but you knew that was going to be addressed in practice leading up to The Game.

There was going to come a point for Michigan in the game with Ohio State when the Wolverines realized they weren't playing Maryland or IU and the Buckeyes were going to respond to U-M scores or big plays, not wilt like a Terrapin or Hoosier.

Speaking of turnovers, you had to take it as a good sign when, in the early going, J.K. Dobbins lost the ball but it bounced right back up to him without Dobbins missing stride in the middle of a 34-yard run.

I just did not believe Michigan to be a match for this Ohio State team.

However, even with what I saw as a competitive gap between the two teams, an Ohio State-Michigan game is still always going to come down to turnovers and mistakes, and this was illustrated in a key sequence in the game.

The Wolverines trailed just 21-13 (that missed extra point on the first drive would have been a critical mistake if the game ended up closer) midway through the second quarter and were driving when quarterback Shea Patterson lost the handle on a snap and Robert Landers recovered on the OSU 16, thwarting the U-M drive. But Michigan responded to that adversity, forcing a fourth-and-4 at the Buckeye 43.

Then came one of the most critical plays of the game. With Drue Chrisman back to punt, Khaleke Hudson jumped offside, giving Ohio State a first down and new life. Buckeye quarterback Justin Fields did not look that gift wolverine in the mouth, immediately connecting with Garrett Wilson for 47 yards, setting up Dobbins' 5-yard touchdown run on the next play to make it 28-13 with 3:15 left before the half.

Michigan still fought back, marching 70 yards to the Buckeye 5. On third down from there, Patterson appeared to connect with Donovan Peoples-Jones for a touchdown, but Jordan Fuller was somehow able to jar the ball loose, forcing Harbaugh to settle for a field goal.

A key fumble, critical penalty and inopportune drop and a feisty Michigan team was forced to head to the locker room trailing 28-16.

Even the most casual observer knows that to make up a two-score deficit against the Buckeyes, especially when they are set to receive the second-half kick, is a difficult task.

Ohio State would take that kick, Dobbins would run for 41 yards on the very first play from scrimmage, and the Buckeyes would march 75 yards for a score and a 35-16 lead. Michigan would never again get closer than 15 points, 42-27 at the 14:23 mark of the fourth period. That drive was aided by a 31-yard punt from Chrisman, giving the hosts the ball at their 40. On the first play of that drive, Hassan Haskins set the Wolverines up in business with a 33-yard run, and he ultimately scored from 2 yards out and added the two-point conversion.

Shortly thereafter, Michigan was forced to go for it on fourth-and-1 in its own territory, and Landers came up big again, stopping Haskins for a 1-yard loss and turning the ball over at the U-M 28. It took Fields and Co. four plays to score on a 16-yard pass to Austin Mack, and it was game, set, match.

About the only real drama in the second half came when Fields was knocked out of the game in the third quarter. Chris Chugunov did his job, leading the Buckeyes to a pair of first downs before Fields was able to return and, on his first play back, scramble and complete a 30-yard scoring strike to freshman sensation Wilson to make it 42-16 with 3:46 on the third-period clock.

Wilson had three catches for 118 yards and the score and set up another score, prompting comparisons with Chris Olave (who was also big with two catches for 68 yards and a 57-yard touchdown) and his breakout game against Michigan last season. There was one major difference between the

two performances, however. Olave caught two passes for a pair of touchdowns against the Wolverines in last year's 62-39 rout. But he also added a key special teams play, blocking a punt that Sevyn Banks returned for a touchdown.

Wilson's key special teams play went the other way. He muffed a punt, giving Michigan new life at the OSU 26. The Buckeye defense stiffened, Michigan lost a yard on three plays and was forced to settle for a 45-yard field goal to make it 42-19 with 2:33 left in the third period.

Harbaugh was lambasted on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum for much of the game for going for field goals instead of being aggressive and going for touchdowns. As BSB staff writer Joe Dempsey eloquently posted, "Harbaugh should be fired for these field goals – or at least fined significantly."

This was the second muffed punt for Wilson this season. It continues to amaze me that for all the success the Buckeyes have had under Urban Meyer and now Ryan Day, they continue to struggle on the punt return unit. Maybe when they are out recruiting, they need to look for someone who has specifically shown to be fearless and excel on punt returns. It takes a special player to be looking up at a punt while speedy opponents are bearing down on them at high speed.

And speaking of punts, if you are looking for a possible chink in the Buckeye armor – and there aren't many, if any at all – keep an eye on Chrisman. Starting with a punt that he had blocked against Wisconsin to set up an easy score, the junior from Cincinnati has not been his usual dynamic self.

His other three punts against the Badgers averaged a respectable 42.3 yards, but he had none inside the 20. Against Maryland he had two boots for a 37.0 average and none inside the 20. Against Rutgers he averaged 35.0 on four punts with one inside the 20 at just the 17. And against Penn State he averaged 41.3 with two inside the 20, but he also had a touchdown from the Lion 41, where he usually would have buried it deep.

He had a solid 45.5 yard average against Michigan with a long of 61, which was one of two touchbacks, no punts inside the 20 and that previously mentioned 31-yard shorty that set up a Michigan score. Chrisman should be a major weapon for the Buckeyes, not a pedestrian punter.

### Dandy Dobbins

As the Michigan game unfolded, I felt like this was the game Dobbins had been building to all season. It had been kind of hard to figure out exactly how he was progressing early in the season because he sat so much during blowouts, leaving him with stellar but hardly eye-popping numbers. In hindsight, the time off during Ohio State's easy wins probably kept him fresher for the stretch drive, and if you look at the big games before The Game, he excelled.

In the first go-around with Wisconsin, he outdueled the ballyhooed Jonathan Taylor, gaining 163 yards and scoring twice on 20 carries and adding three catches for 58 yards for good measure. Taylor, meanwhile, gained just 52 yards on 20 carries. In the big battle with Penn State, Dobbins pounded the Lions with 36 carries, grinding out 157 yards and

scoring two more times.

Ohio State and Michigan players are defined, however, by how they play in The Game, and Dobbins saved his best for last. He had a career-high 211 yards rushing and scored four times on his 31 carries and averaged 24.5 yards on his two receptions. In a game filled with Buckeye stars, Dobbins' star may have shone the brightest.

On WTVN radio after the game, the station's football crew had a spirited discussion as to who was the team's most valuable player, which Buckeye was most worthy of the Heisman Trophy, etc. Former Ohio State quarterback Stan Jackson was adamant that it should be Dobbins on all counts, drawing surprise from his mates including former Buckeyes Bill Conley and Jeff Logan and host Matt McCoy, that the former QB was not in the Fields camp.

Jackson claimed that if it weren't for the presence of Dobbins, Fields would not be able to do what he does. He gave an X's and O's explanation to support that contention, but it was too sophisticated for me. Still, I may be on Jackson's side on this one.

Look at it this way. If you take Dobbins' average rushing numbers in the three big games against the Badgers, Lions and Wolverines, three of the best defensive teams in the country, and average them out over a 14-game season, he would gain 2,478 yards and score 37 touchdowns.

I know those are fantasy numbers, but still pretty impressive when you consider the competition.

Dobbins certainly deserves to be up there in the pantheon of Ohio State's great running backs and earned his stripes in what will probably be his last game against Michigan.

There was one point on which I have to disagree with Jackson, however.

In making his case of Dobbins over Fields, the former Buckeye quarterback insisted that the drop-off from Dobbins to his top reserve, Master Teague, was greater than the drop-off from Fields to his understudy, Chugunov. Thus, Dobbins was more valuable.

Let me ask any of you, including Stan: Which would you rather go into postseason battle with: Fields at quarterback and Teague at tailback or Chugunov at QB and Dobbins at tailback?

I'll take my chances with Fields and Teague, though Teague had very modest numbers in The Game, rushing 12 times for 29 yards and a 2.4-yard average.

One final note concerning Dobbins and the Wolverines. I've always heard that strange things go on in a pile on the football field, but I don't know that I have ever seen a more bizarre play than the one where the Michigan defenders attempted to remove Dobbins' shoe after he was downed in the second quarter.

### Coverage From Indy Online

Just a reminder that, due to Buckeye Sports Bulletin's print publishing schedule, our primary coverage of the Big Ten Championship Game will be online at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com. This will include coverage leading up to the game, as well as coverage of the game itself.

If you are not already taking advantage of BuckeyeSports.com, a free service to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers, see the simple sign-up instructions on page 6 of this issue or give us a call at (614) 486-2202 and we will be glad to walk you through the process. We also look forward to hearing from you on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum.



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