

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 40, No. 4

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Oct. 31, 2020



COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

**EMPTY VENUE** – Due to the Big Ten’s decision to not sell tickets to the general public, there were only 1,344 people at Ohio State’s season opener against Nebraska. Attendance was limited to family of the players and coaches, as well as essential staff and members of the media.

## *Lack Of Atmosphere Noticeable In Ohio State’s Season-Opening Victory*

By **ANDREW LIND**  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Few places in college football are as electric as Ohio Stadium on a Saturday afternoon in the fall, with more than 107,000 fans regularly filling the stands to cheer on their beloved Buckeyes – except that wasn’t the case on Oct. 24 when Ohio State opened its 2020 season with a 52-17 win over Nebraska.

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic not only pushed the start of the Big Ten’s conference-only season back seven weeks but also limited attendance at games to family of the players and coaches, as well as university officials, medical personnel, television crews, security and members of the media. In all, the Buckeyes and Cornhuskers played in front of 1,344 people – the smallest crowd in the 99-season history

of Ohio Stadium, breaking the previous low of 5,482 people set in a defeat of Wilmington College in 1926.

“It was definitely weird,” Ohio State junior quarterback Justin Fields said after the game. “I was looking up to the stands to celebrate with some fans, but nobody was really out there. Of course, it was a little bit different, but we just try to bring our own energy to the game. I think we handled it well.”

Fields finished the game 20-of-21 passing for 276 yards and two touchdowns, including one where freshman wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba made a highlight-reel catch in the back of the end zone. A play like that would typically reverberate through the stadium, but the noise level barely moved above the 70-decibel murmur track provided by the Big Ten for use during games.

The same could be said for when cornerback Sevyn Banks scooped up a fumble and returned it 55 yards for a touchdown to put the Buckeyes ahead 38-14 midway through the third quarter.

“It was weird,” said Ohio State first-year defensive coordinator and the always excitable Kerry Coombs. “I’m not going to tell you it wasn’t weird. It was quiet. It’s something we’re going to all have to get used to. A guy scoops and scores a fumble, and you know how that place would have been. It would have been absolutely bananas. It’s just different, so we have to get used to that because that’s how it’s going to be.”

“I think that we will, but I’m not going to tell you that it’s as much fun. It’s not. When that place is rocking, that’s where you want to be.”

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## Buckeye Leaves

Despite falling behind 7-0 on the first drive in the season opener, Ohio State rallied back to defeat Nebraska handily, 52-17.

The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff distributed Buckeye Leaves to the deserving players who stood out against the Cornhuskers at Ohio Stadium on Oct. 24, and we asked our subscribers to hand out leaves of their own.

**Wyatt Crosher, BSB:** While Garrett Wilson was the lead receiver for Ohio State, Chris Olave was nearly just as impressive in the Buckeyes' debut win over Nebraska.

Olave had six catches for 104 yards, including a long of 29 yards in the 52-17 win over the Cornhuskers. While Wilson dominated in the slot, Olave made plenty of crucial plays through the air to give Justin Fields another weapon to use in the pass game.

Olave left the game in the third quarter following a hard hit to the head by Quinton Newsome that led to a fumble, but his production prior to that play was more than enough to make a major impact on the offense.

**Joe Dempsey, BSB:** Switching positions can be challenging for most athletes. Fortunately for Ohio State, Garrett Wilson is not like most athletes. In his first game at slot receiver, Wilson demonstrated how effective he can be at that position.

Wilson reeled in all seven of his targets for a career-high 129 yards and one touchdown, helping lead the Buckeyes to victory over the Cornhuskers.

The sophomore standout made one of the biggest plays

of the game when he hauled in a 42-yard touchdown from Justin Fields to give Ohio State a 14-7 lead. Wilson also added a clutch 16-yard catch on a third-and-5 play from the Buckeyes' 30-yard line on the first drive of the second half.

Nebraska had no answer for Wilson in the slot, and the dynamic ability he displayed against the Huskers bodes well for the Buckeyes moving forward.

**Andrew Lind, BSB:** Quarterback Justin Fields looked like he was in midseason form against the Cornhuskers, completing 20 of his 21 pass attempts for 276 yards and two touchdowns, with his only incompleting being on a 50-yard pass that Chris Olave could not hold onto in the end zone.

Fields also added 54 yards and another score on the ground, which was helpful because the Buckeyes could not get their run game going for much of the afternoon. His ability to run the read-option helped sustain drives and really put his all-around talents on display.

**Patrick Mayhorn, BSB:** My Buckeye leaf goes to the most effective defender on the field for Ohio State against Nebraska, who also happens to be the most interesting story on the entire team. Just under two months removed from being hospitalized after being shot in the face as he was breaking up an altercation, senior defensive tackle Haskell Garrett was an unstoppable force in the middle of the Buckeye defense against the Cornhuskers.

He notched decent stats on the day, but his impact was felt outside of the stat sheet as well. He made it much tougher on the Nebraska rushing attack whenever he was on the field and provided some much-needed security for

Ohio State at the defensive tackle spot, which entered the season with plenty of questions about depth.

The defense behind him had some issues, but Garrett looked ready to go, which is only made more impressive by the adversity he's faced since September.

**Frank Moskowitz, BSB:** "Haskell Garrett, no doubt. I didn't think he would play, let alone be a major contributor. On offense, Justin Fields is Justin Fields. Give him a leaf."

### BSB Subscribers

"Justin Fields – took off from where he did last year. Efficient. Accurate."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"Justin Fields for being even better than last year (if that was possible). Haskell Garrett for bulldozing everyone in front of him. Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson for being the best receivers I have seen this season. Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Julian Fleming for Garrett Wilson-type debuts. And the whole Buckeye D for so actively generating turnovers!"

– AnthonyBuckeye

"Haskell Garrett is the man. I was in awe the whole game that he was there and performing mightily. Way to go Haskell!"

– PeyoteBuck

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## From The Message Board

**Ohio State had a rocky start against Nebraska, trailing 7-0 early, before the Buckeyes rebounded to win the game 52-17. Buckeye Sports Bulletin asked our readers and staff members what concerned them the most about the Buckeyes moving forward. Here are some of their responses:**

"Running game. I'm confident it will improve. Today, RBs seemed to have difficulty seeing openings when they were there. May be a timing issue too?"

– Terrier Buck

"I know that the running game wasn't as good as expected, but that is likely to be fixed. What concerns me is that dual-threat QBs still run effectively for much of the game against our D. We need to fix this if we want to pay Clemson back at the end of the season."

– AnthonyBuckeye

"Defense is suspect. Linebackers look super lost."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"I'm not really concerned about anything yet. It was a classic Buckeye performance, slow start, then waking up in the late second or third quarter to kick butt."

"There is some rust but that will blow off in the next couple of games. Remember, this was a conference game, not against Akron or Bowling Green, etc."

– PeyoteBuck

"The easy answer, and honestly the correct answer in my opinion is that Ohio State is starting two running backs that don't fit the scheme very well. It can be worked around if needed, but it seemed pretty obvious that OSU wasn't comfortable running Teague or Sermon outside because neither is fast enough to get to the edge on time, which eliminates a pretty massive part of the zone running scheme."

"That frees up the defense to sell out to stop inside runs, which Nebraska did pretty much all game, which then makes both of those very downhill, very one-dimensional backs essentially useless, because neither is big enough to be a true power back, and the scheme isn't really built for that."

– Patrick Mayhorn, BSB

"I essentially agree with all of what Patrick had to say. I've been in this business more than 40 years and the oldest coach-speak trick in the book is to blame your team's shortcomings on the fact the opposing team showed looks that were not expected. OK ... exactly what were you expecting?"

"It is certainly within the realm of possibility that the running game improves as the offensive line jells. But Master Teague reminds me too much of Lydell Ross (needs a clean running lane) and I haven't seen enough of Trey Sermon to know who he reminds me of. Right now, Justin Fields is going to have to run the ball some. How much? Stay tuned."

– Mark Rea, BSB

"I agree that the running game was the most concerning part of the game for Ohio State, but I also think that's just the result of 10 months without seeing another team more than anything."

"You can practice running against different defensive schemes as much as you want, but it's absolutely not the same as going against a real opponent. They'll improve as the season goes on, but it would have been unwise to keep trying to establish the run when it simply wasn't happening today."

– Andrew Lind, BSB

"I wanted to think of a unique response, but I have to agree with the running game. I have concerns about having the backs switch off on each drive, and neither Master Teague nor Trey Sermon impressed me today. I will say, though, that there was a good point made postgame about how J.K. Dobbins looked pretty mediocre in Week 1 last season against Florida Atlantic, so I wouldn't say it's a major worry after just one game."

– Wyatt Crosher, BSB

"I'm concerned about the running game, but I think that will get corrected. I am really concerned about the big plays given up by the defense, especially on quarterback runs. I had forgotten what a big play by an opponent looks like."

– Frank Moskowitz, BSB



# Run Game, Defense Worrisome For Buckeyes

linebackers or safeties.

The problem did not escape the notice of Fox Sports color analyst Joel Klatt, who observed the Ohio State defense “has had trouble in the past with running quarterbacks.” Even with all of that aforementioned star power on the field in the Fiesta Bowl, Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence rushed for 107 yards against the Buckeyes, including a 67-yard touchdown bolt near the end of the first half.

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

In addition to struggling against running quarterbacks – Penn State QB Sean Clifford rushed for 119 yards and a touchdown in his team’s opener, by the way – the Ohio State defense seems susceptible again to tight ends getting free along the boundary. McCaffrey and Martinez targeted their tight ends seven times in the game and completed five of those attempts for 55 yards.

Needless to say, the defensive mistakes are going to have to be eliminated going forward if the Buckeyes truly expect to be taken seriously as the newly minted No. 3-ranked team in the nation.

### Fields Almost Perfect

Now that I’ve dispensed with the bad news, we can get to the feel-good portion of the season opener, the part dominated by Fields and his rebuilt, plant-based physique that helped showcase a passing attack that would be the envy of most NFL teams.

Fields not only connected on 20 of 21 attempts for 276 yards and two touchdowns, it was the sheer beauty of some of his throws that punctuated his performance. Perhaps the most majestic of his passes was the only one that fell incomplete, a high-arching spiral to Chris Olave that would have gone for a 43-yard touchdown if not for an excellent play by Nebraska defender Dicaprio Bootle, who swept Olave’s legs out from under him at the OSU receiver went up to make the catch.

With the exception of that pass, Fields and his receivers enjoyed a perfect day. The QB’s completion percentage of 95.2 was the second-best single-game performance in program history (the best for anyone with more than 10 attempts) and increased his career percentage to 68.8. That ranks second all-time to Dwayne Haskins, who connected on 70.0 percent of his career attempts, but is far above J.T. Barrett, who occupies the No. 3 spot at 63.5 percent.

To be sure, Fields was aided in his high percentage by sure-handed catches from the likes of Olave and Garrett Wilson, each of whom cracked the 100-yard mark in receiving yards. And it’s difficult to believe anyone is going to make a better reception than freshman Jaxon Smith-Njigba, whose gravity-defying toe tap in the fourth quarter turned a simple 5-yard touchdown into the stuff of which legends are made.

### Odds & Ends

• The victory ran Ohio State’s all-time record to 12-6 in games played on Oct. 24. That doesn’t seem all that great until you realize the Buckeyes have won 12 of their last 13 games played on that date. The last

time OSU lost a game when the calendar read Oct. 24 was a 12-3 defeat to No. 12 Wisconsin at Camp Randall Stadium in 1959.

• Fields threw a pair of touchdown passes against Nebraska, the fewest number of touchdowns through the air for Ohio State in a season opener since Barrett threw for two TDs during a 34-17 win against Navy in the 2014 opener. The last time the Buckeyes threw for fewer than two touchdowns in an opener came in 2009 when Terrelle Pryor threw just one during a 31-27 victory against Navy. Pryor connected on a 38-yard strike to Dane Sanzenbacher on the sixth offensive play of the game to provide OSU with its only score through the air that afternoon.

• The 276-yard performance was the 11th time Fields reaching the 200-yard mark while with the Buckeyes. That ties him with Mike Tomczak (1982-85) for ninth on the OSU all-time list. Barrett holds the program record with 27 games of 200 or more yards in the passing department.

• Dating back to last season, Fields now has a streak of four straight games in which he has eclipsed the 275-yard mark. That ties a program mark established in 1998 by Joe Germaine. As unbelievable as it seems, Haskins strung together only three straight performances of 275 yards passing or more – and he did that twice – during his record-breaking 2018 season when he established the OSU single-season record with 4,831 yards.

• Ohio State went a dozen seasons without having two receivers having 100-yard performances in the same game, and now the Buckeyes have done it three times in the past four years. Wilson totaled 129 yards against the Cornhuskers while Olave had 104, and they join Terry McLaurin (118) and Johnnie Dixon (102) at Maryland in 2018 as well as Parris Campbell (105) and C.J. Saunders (102), who accomplished the feat against UNLV in 2017. Before that, you have to go back to the 2006 Fiesta Bowl against Notre Dame when Ted Ginn Jr. totaled 167 yards and Antonio Holmes added 124.

• Junior cornerback Sevyn Banks accomplished a rare achievement when he returned a fumble 55 yards for a touchdown against the Cornhuskers. Coupled with his touchdown return of a blocked punt in 2018, Banks became the first OSU player since Bradley Roby to score TDs on fumble and punt returns during his career. Roby returned a fumble and a blocked punt (as well as an interception) for touchdowns in 2012 and pounced on another blocked punt in the end zone for a score against Northwestern in 2013.

• Banks turned in the longest fumble return for a touchdown for the Buckeyes since Darron Lee returned one 61 yards during a 34-17 win against Navy in the 2014 season opener. It was the first of two fumble returns for touchdowns for Lee in 2014. He also returned one 33 yards for a score during his team’s 42-28 win against Michigan.

• It seems these days the names of football players are getting more and more unusual. The previously mentioned Nebraska fifth-year senior cornerback Dicaprio Bootle, for example, might be named for a favorite uncle or some other relative. Or the possibility remains that his mother, Caliope, was a fan of such movies as “What’s Eating Gilbert Grape,” “The Basketball Diaries,” “Marvin’s Room” or “Titanic,” all films starring Leonard DiCaprio. Perhaps it’s only coincidence that “Titanic,” a film that captured a record-tying 11 Academy Awards, was released in 1997 – the same year Bootle was born.

As with just about any other opener in just about any other season, the Ohio State football team did some good things and some not-so-good things during a 52-17 romp over Nebraska.

But with a schedule shortened by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the virus providing little (if any) room for error moving forward, the Buckeyes can ill afford to treat this as just any other season if they truly expect to contend for a national championship.

With the notable exception of Justin Fields throwing to a talented corps of receivers, Ohio State looked very much like a work in progress and certainly not the loaded, talent-laden machine we had all been led to believe it was.

Despite three returning starters on the offensive line, including consensus first-team All-America guard Wyatt Davis, the Buckeyes struggled to establish much of a running game until late in the contest. OSU totaled only 90 yards on 24 carries during the first half, and only 44 of those yards came from the running backs. Perhaps most troubling was the fact the Buckeyes were stopped three times on third-and-short in the second quarter alone, including twice on third-and-1.

Those struggles came against a Nebraska defense that ranked 11th in the Big Ten last year against the run. Ohio State did seem to get its rushing act together better in the second half, but some of that was due to the score getting out of hand and both teams going to their second- and third-team personnel.

Almost as troubling – perhaps even more so depending upon your point of view – was the play of the defense.

I understand the Buckeyes have been forced to make wholesale personnel changes from a year ago, beginning with co-defensive coordinator Jeff Hafley, who left the program to take over as head coach at Boston College. Also gone are defensive end Chase Young and cornerback Jeff Okudah, the second and third overall picks in the most recent NFL draft, as well as cornerback Damon Arnette (No. 19 overall), defensive tackle DaVon Hamilton and linebacker Malik Harrison (both third-round selections), and safety Jordan Fuller, who despite falling to the sixth round has emerged as a rookie starter for the Los Angeles Rams.

That’s a lot of talent to replace in the space of just one offseason, and especially so when there was no spring practice, no spring game and a jerry-rigged fall camp thanks to the pandemic.

Still, that is no excuse for Ohio State to get no better play from its defense than they did against Nebraska. With a rebuilt defensive line that is not nearly as physical as last year’s unit, it is imperative for the Buckeyes’ linebackers – especially multiyear starters such as Tuf Borland and Pete Werner – to play assignment football. But as in the past, they have trouble getting off blocks, experience difficulty navigating through the sea of bodies in the middle of the field, and struggle to stick with their assignments.

Those weaknesses were exposed and exploited in last year’s Fiesta Bowl against Clemson and were on full display again against Nebraska as the Cornhuskers totaled 217 yards on the ground. Included in that total were a 47-yard run by freshman quarterback Luke McCaffrey and a 39-yard scamper by veteran QB Adrian Martinez. Each run came when the OSU defense failed to set an edge, and then the Nebraska QB cut back into an open field void of any



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### 2020-21 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE (VOL. 40)

No. 1	Sept. 19	No. 7	Nov. 21
No. 2	Oct. 3	No. 8	Nov. 28
No. 3	Oct. 17	No. 9	Dec. 5
No. 4	Oct. 31	No. 10	Dec. 12
No. 5	Nov. 7	No. 11	Dec. 19
No. 6	Nov. 14	No. 12	Dec. 26

The 2021 schedule will be determined based on the Big Ten’s winter or spring schedule.

The next issue (Nov. 7 cover date) will be mailed on Nov. 3.

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## Freshman Safety Williams Tears ACL

Ohio State's secondary was dealt a blow a little more than one week out from its opening win against Nebraska on Oct. 24. A potential injury to highly touted safety Kourt Williams was reported on Oct. 17, and it was later confirmed by Ohio State on Oct. 22. According to the report, Williams tore his anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in practice and would miss the entire 2020 season. The report also states that the injury will require surgery, meaning that there is no estimated timetable for a return to play.

"We lost Kourt Williams during preseason," head coach Ryan Day said on Oct. 22 during his weekly radio show. "He was having a great preseason, so we're hoping he has a speedy recovery on his knee."

This is far from the first torn ACL that Ohio State has dealt with in recent seasons. Running back Marcus Crowley suffered the same injury late in the 2019 season and has yet to be fully cleared, nearly 11 months removed from the initial injury. Third-year receiver Kamryn Babb has twice dealt with a torn ACL, missing his first two seasons in Columbus as a result.

In a 2016 study published by the British Journal of Sports Medicine on ACL tears in soccer players, the average timetable for return to play is a little over seven months, though that's certainly not set in stone.

With his year officially over, Williams will have to wait a little longer to make his much-awaited Ohio State debut. The former four-star earned high praise from Ohio State's coaching staff throughout the offseason for both his talent and ability as a leader.

"I'll be surprised if he's not a captain when he's here," Day said. "I've said that to him and his parents a million times. They're probably tired of hearing me say that."

Linebackers coach Al Washington saw Williams as a fit at Ohio State's Bullet position, and he will likely battle for a starting role in that spot in 2021 if healthy.

"I think he fits like a glove," Washington said last winter. "You watch his high school tape. You see his body physically. We do see him there and in his film he played some Bullet-type position. And he's got contact courage. He'll go up and hit and he has no problem sticking his face in there and putting his body in there. But he's a really good athlete. He can cover ground."

Williams was expected to contribute off the bench for Ohio State in 2020 behind safeties Josh Proctor and Marcus Hooker, as well as senior linebacker Baron Browning, now in that Bullet role.

## Ohio State-Penn State Draws Prime-Time Kick

What was once rumored is now official. Ohio State's Oct. 31 matchup with Penn State will draw a prime-time kick on ABC, the Big Ten officially confirmed on Oct. 19. The week two

matchup will kick off from Happy Valley at 7:30 p.m. with Kirk Herbstreit and Brad Nessler on the call for ABC.

While a prime-time battle at Penn State would usually draw a white-out crowd to greet the Buckeyes – as it has five times since the tradition began in 2004, yielding a 2-3 record for PSU – the Big Ten's rule against fans in the stands this fall will bring a vastly different feeling to Beaver Stadium.

In fact, former Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer, who saw four white-outs during his time with the Buckeyes, said on the Big Ten Network in early October that he thinks the lack of fans could be a major issue for Penn State, which he mentioned to Penn State head coach James Franklin.

"I told James Franklin this: That became the most difficult place I've ever coached in my career," Meyer said.

"I mean, that (stadium) was as loud as I've ever heard, and we had street-fight games with them every game. In my mind, that is a 10-point differential when you play in that kind of game."

"That means you have to be on point. You remember the preparation days that drove you insane on Tuesday and Wednesday, to have that music and that jet engine blowing in your ear at practice, and you have to do it. But you can't make corrections at practice, so your coaching suffers that entire week."

Even if it is an issue, Penn State isn't trying to pay it too much mind.

"In some ways we're going to get back to the purest form of football," Franklin said. "You're playing in some field connected to a school or a church, and it's your parents that are sitting there watching, and it's the purest form of football."

## Smith Explains Gameday Procedures At OSU

Ohio State released its official gameday procedures for the COVID-adjusted season on Oct. 19, including rulings on the number of parents allowed in the stadium, the marching band, tailgating and several other key points.

The company line, which was touted by athletic director Gene Smith shortly after Ohio State shared its procedures, is that "every game is a home game" for Buckeye fans this fall.

"Every game is a home game, so we want to encourage everyone to not host or be a part of large gatherings or large watch parties," Smith said during a virtual news conference. "We want to encourage people to not create environments where they become super spreaders of the virus and encourage them to continue to follow the protocols of mask-wearing and washing hands and physical distancing and enjoy our Buckeyes virtually or on television as you would like to, but not in large gatherings."

To encourage fans to stay home and stay safe, Ohio State is joining the Big Ten in completely prohibiting fans in the stands, allowing up to 656 player and coaching family guests and up to 400 family members for visiting teams. All families will be spaced out at least six feet apart in the A deck of Ohio Stadium.

Also prohibited is tailgating of any sort on campus. OSU deputy chief of police Tracy Hahn said that Ohio State will be monitoring parking lots for tailgating and enforcing mask-wearing around campus.

"Don't come to campus to tailgate," she said. "Please. We will be checking the parking lots to make sure people are not on campus partying. Mask-wearing is very important on campus. It's one of our rules here."

Also notable in the group of those who will not be allowed in the stadium this season: Ohio State's famed marching band. Smith explained that with limited capacity rules within the conference, Ohio State wanted to make sure that players, coaches and families were the first priority, which didn't leave enough space for the

## 2020 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	2020 Record
Oct. 24	NEBRASKA	W, 52-17	FOX	0-1
Oct. 31	at Penn State*	7:30 p.m.	ABC	0-1
Nov. 7	RUTGERS	TBA	TBA	1-0
Nov. 14	at Maryland	TBA	TBA	0-1
Nov. 21	INDIANA*	TBA	TBA	1-0
Nov. 28	at Illinois*	TBA	TBA	0-1
Dec. 5	at Michigan State*	TBA	TBA	0-1
Dec. 12	MICHIGAN*	12 p.m.	FOX	1-0
Dec. 19	Big Ten Championship**	8 p.m.	FOX	

\* 2019 bowl team

\*\* at Indianapolis (Lucas Oil Stadium)

## BSB Staff On Target With Nebraska Predictions

The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff kicked off BuckeyeSports.com's traditional Staff Predictions feature with some of the most accurate predictions ever. Wyatt Crosher had the Buckeyes defeating Nebraska 52-20, and Andrew Lind projected a 56-17 score. Joe Dempsey (45-13) and Patrick Mayhorn (46-20) were also in the ballpark.

Staff Predictions are posted each gameday morning.

The BSB staff also provides electronic recruiting coverage, daily stories and updates, as well as presenting reprints from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives. We will be featuring reprints covering games from our 40th Anniversary Football Season as part of our popular Reprint Thursdays.

Additionally, staff members man the BuckeyeSports.com Forum, interacting with subscribers on the hot topics of the day. Don't forget the live Official Game Thread. If something interesting, troubling or exciting happens in the game, share your thoughts in real time.

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band. The cheer team, spirit team and Brutus will all also be watching the games from home.

While the on-field pageantry may be on hiatus this season for the health of the players and coaches in the game, Ohio State is offering a way to experience the sights and sounds of a traditional gameday environment, through a second-screen feature called Scarlet Saturday.

"Each home game Saturday, Buckeye fans will be encouraged to experience and enjoy a slice of game day through a Scarlet Saturday production, a live-streamed second-screen experience from inside Ohio Stadium, and that will also include pre-recorded band performances," the press release says.

The stands may be sparsely populated this fall, but those seats won't go unfilled. Ohio State's assistant AD of ticketing, Brett Scarborough, told media that as of Oct. 19, the university had already sold more than 4,300 fan cutouts that will give fans a chance to have their likeness represented in the stadium on a cardboard cutout.

Lastly, Ohio Stadium will still have at least some of its usual in-game murmur, as will stadiums across the conference. The release explained that home teams will be allowed to play a "murmur" track provided by the Big Ten throughout games.

"The Big Ten Conference has provided each school with crowd noise "murmur" audio tracks for use during the games," the release explained. "The volume will stay at 70 decibels – no higher – during the run of game play, and it can be increased to a maximum of 90 decibels during celebration moments ... for the home team, of course."

Smith described all of the new protocols as "very weird" but told media that he feels the most difficult obstacles are finally behind the conference, and that he isn't very worried about gameday operations.

"Once we were able to get the presidents to allow us to play, there was nothing after that that was challenging at all," he said. "The hardest part, the biggest emotions – and my team can attest – I was a complete idiot. It was

hard, it was painful. Once we got the vote, and we knew we could go, I'd say after that getting the schedule was hard. But for me, nothing was hard after that."

## Frost Credits OSU For Return To Football

Ohio State and Nebraska spent much of the Big Ten's month away from football on the forefront of a push for a return to play, specifically at the top of each program, where Day and Nebraska head coach Scott Frost campaigned at every turn for a fall season. Those efforts did not go unnoticed, as each coach took the chance in game-week press conferences to acknowledge the other's impact on the return to football.

"We're grateful to Ohio State," Frost said. "It's strange where you find allies in certain things, and I think we had an ally in Ohio State to try to get the season played. I don't think it would have got done without Dr. (Jim) Borchers there, without Ryan Day continuing to push it, Gene Smith continuing to push it."

"I have to give most of the credit for this to Ohio State. We might have been one of the sounding gongs in this, we're saying we want to play, but I don't think it would have got done without their doctor taking the lead, figuring out a way to present it to the presidents to get football back. Dr. Borchers deserves a lot of credit for this. I think they did a good job at Ohio State kind of bringing it all together and presenting a plan that allowed us to get back to doing what we probably should have been doing all the time."

Day was not as long-winded but did say that he has "nothing but a ton of respect" for Frost, and mentioned that the two, who met through Chip Kelly, a former employer of both coaches, had plenty of conversations this offseason.

In his press conference, Frost went on to say that he plans to cheer for the Buckeyes for the rest of the season, after that week-one matchup, of course.

"I'm going to root for them in every single game except this first one," Frost said. "Because



I'm grateful to them for going shoulder to shoulder and fighting to get (Big Ten football) back. Our kids are excited to play, we're excited to play, and there's been a lot of moments where I didn't think we'd get here."

### Ohio State Up To No. 3 In Polls

After multiple weeks of staying outside of the current top four, mostly due to voters not placing the team in the poll until it played a game this season, Ohio State moved up to No. 3 in both the Amway coaches poll and the Associated Press top 25 poll following its 52-17 win over Nebraska.

The Buckeyes trail Clemson and Alabama, who are No. 1 and No. 2, respectively, in both polls. Ohio State received a pair of first-place votes in the coaches poll but none in the AP poll.

Ohio State was the lone Big Ten team in the top 10 in the coaches poll, with Wisconsin coming just short at No. 11. Michigan moved up three spots to No. 14 and Penn State, off an overtime loss to Indiana, fell 10 spots to No. 17.

The Hoosiers moved into the poll at No. 19, while Minnesota fell out of the top 25 following its loss to the Wolverines.

In the AP poll, the Badgers and Wolverines both moved up five spots to No. 9 and No. 13, respectively, while the Hoosiers moved into the rankings at No. 17, leading the Nittany Lions, who were at No. 18, by one spot.

Northwestern, fresh off a dominant 43-3 win over Maryland, earned 20 votes in the AP poll and 24 in the coaches poll but did not crack the top 25 in either of the major polls.

### NCAA To Vote On NIL, Transfer Rules

The NCAA Division I Council announced on Oct. 14 that it has officially proposed two potentially landscape shifting measures to be voted on by the Council in January. The first and seemingly more significant of the two deals with name, image and likeness (NIL) rules, which have been kicked around both the NCAA and the federal government for several years now.

"This is an important milestone in the prog-

ress toward modernizing Division I rules to better support student-athletes in all of their endeavors," said Council chair M. Grace Calhoun, athletics director at Pennsylvania. "We know additional refinements may be needed as we make sure modifications are fair, recognize the importance of the current recruiting structure and that every student-athlete has the same opportunity to benefit."

The proposal details exactly what NIL rights would look like for student-athletes. The proposal states that rule changes would provide room for several opportunities for athletes to profit off their NIL rights:

"Allow student-athletes to use their name, image and likeness to promote camps and clinics, private lessons, their own products and services, and commercial products or services; allow student-athletes to be paid for their autographs and personal appearances; allow student-athletes to crowdfund for nonprofits or charitable organizations, catastrophic events and family hardships, as well as for educational expenses not covered by cost of attendance;

allow student-athletes the opportunity to use professional advice and marketing assistance regarding name, image and likeness activities, as well as professional representation in contract negotiations related to name, image and likeness activities, with some restrictions."

The proposal goes on to establish that universities would be prohibited from any involvement in these deals, both in development and in securing sponsorship agreements.

Additionally, those endorsements will not be allowed to feature university branding, and athletes are not allowed to "participate in activities involving a commercial product or service that conflicts with NCAA legislation (such as sports wagering or banned substances)."

As an accompanying feature, athletes will be given access to agents for guidance on marketing and potential sponsorship opportunities.

Secondly, as a separate proposal, the NCAA appears to be headed toward the one-time free transfer rule that several coaches, including

Continued On Page 6

## From The Pages Of BSB

### 35 Years Ago – 1985

Instead of round on the end and high in the middle, it was round on the end and flat in the middle for the Ohio State football team when it hosted Purdue on Oct. 19.

But it all worked out to a 41-27 Ohio State victory.

"It was one of those games," said Buckeye coach Earle Bruce after his team had beaten Purdue in front of 89,888 fans in Ohio Stadium. "Jump off to a good start with a lot of zip; jump on them hard playing well both offensively and defensively; make one mistake in the kicking game and then let them get back in the game and tie it up; and then come on at the end."

Bruce described it aptly.

The Buckeyes, who raised their Big Ten record to 2-1 and their overall mark to 5-1 in beating Purdue for the 10th time in the last 12 meetings between the schools, didn't accomplish it without letting a 17-0 lead get away. The Boilermakers, with rifle-armed quarterback Jim Everett at the controls, aired it out to get back into a 27-27 tie with 8:35 left in the game.

But Ohio State was not dead. The Buckeyes put together a 55-yard drive with tailback Keith Byars – making his season debut – capping the drive to put the Buckeyes back on top for good.

### 30 Years Ago – 1990

Ohio State's smoldering senior volcanoes – quarterback Greg Frey and flanker Jeff Graham – erupted all over West Lafayette, Ind., Oct. 20, helping to bury Purdue under a variety of touchdown pass plays in the Buckeyes' 42-2 romp over the Boilermakers.

The first eruption came midway through the second quarter with a bit of dippy-do. Frey handed the ball off to Graham on an apparent reverse, but the flanker turned and hurled the ball back to his quarterback, who outran the Purdue defense to the end zone for a 60-yard touchdown play.

That made the score 21-2 in favor of the Buckeyes, and they never looked back. Frey and Graham hooked up twice more in the game – the more conventional way from quarterback to receiver – on touchdowns of 58 and 48 yards.

Frey finished the game with eight completions in just 11 attempts for 172 yards and three TDs. He also had the touchdown reception for 60 yards.

Graham, who earned Big Bear Buckeye of the Week honors, wound up with four receptions for 144 yards and two touchdowns.

"It has been a long time since we had a game like this one, and it feels pretty good," Frey said. "It's been a real long time since I came out in the third quarter. It was something we needed, and I'm glad we got it. It gives us a lot of confidence."

### 25 Years Ago – 1995

If ever a football team needed to come home, the Ohio State Buckeyes were it.

Ohio State, weary from back-to-back difficult road conquests at Penn State and Wisconsin, had a true homecoming when it returned home to Ohio Stadium to meet Purdue on Oct. 21.

The fourth-ranked Buckeyes, perhaps still groggy from their road forays, shrugged off another perplexing first-quarter showing and went on to blank the Boilermakers 28-0 in OSU's homecoming game at rain-soaked Ohio Stadium.

The heavily favored Buckeyes held only a 7-0 lead late in the

second quarter, despite a trio of botched Purdue punts deep in Boilermaker territory.

The final score was a bit deceptive. OSU scored four touchdowns but just missed on three more. The Buckeyes were stopped at the Purdue 1 on a fourth-down play, fumbled at the Purdue 1 another time and had a pass intercepted just outside the goal line as well.

### 20 Years Ago – 2000

In the wake of Ohio State's stunning home defeat to Minnesota Oct. 21, the newspaper columns and radio talk shows were ablaze with criticism of quarterback Steve Bellisari and the OSU offense. After all, Bellisari was just 11 of 28 passing for 130 yards in the 29-17 loss to the Gophers.

But the junior captain from Boca Raton, Fla., rebounded in a big way to spearhead OSU's 38-10 win at Iowa Oct. 28. Bellisari had career highs in completions (17), passing yards (315) and touchdowns (three) as the Buckeyes routed the Hawkeyes.

Likewise, his two main receivers, Reggie Germany and Ken-Yon Rambo, came up big at Iowa as each notched his first touchdown catch of the season.

"I don't think there is any question we executed the passing game better today than we did last week," said OSU coach John Cooper after his team improved to 6-1 overall and 3-1 in Big Ten play.

### 15 Years Ago – 2005

The first five minutes of Ohio State's eventual 41-10 win over Indiana Oct. 22 provided a pretty good indicator of what was to come over the remainder of the day. IU took the ball first and gained 6 yards in three plays before being forced to punt. The Hoosiers would finish with 137 yards of total offense for the afternoon.

When OSU took over possession, it promptly set itself back 15 yards by being called for a clipping, the first of eight penalties that would cost the Buckeyes a total of 95 yards – not to mention a touchdown.

After the clipping penalty, Ohio State was forced to punt, but Indiana's Tony Grosfield mishandled the boot and OSU special teams demon Antonio Smith fell on the ball, giving his team possession at the Hoosier 28-yard line. Three plays later, Troy Smith found Santonio Holmes on a quick slant that the receiver took to the end zone for a quick touchdown that gave the Buckeyes a 7-0 lead with 10:37 to play in the first quarter.

So it went for much of the day. Indiana's offense was almost entirely stifled by Ohio State's defense, the Buckeye offense moved the ball fine when it wasn't shooting itself in the foot, and a few special teams swings here and there allowed OSU to put 40-plus points on the board for the first time since early in the 2003 season.

### 10 Years Ago – 2010

Senior left guard Justin Boren admitted to being annoyed all week long. Jim Tressel even swore once in front of his players.

It was that kind of week for the Ohio State football team, which kept itself alive in the hunt for a Big Ten and, perhaps, national title and washed out the taste of two recent losses to the

Boilermakers with a 49-0 blasting of visiting Purdue.

The victory handed the Boilermakers their first conference loss of the season and improved No. 11 OSU to 3-1 in the league and 7-1 overall. In the process, the Buckeyes avoided becoming the second team in Tressel's tenure as head coach to endure a losing streak while also exacting some revenge for a stunning upset suffered in 2009 at the hands of the unranked Boilermakers.

One week prior to the Oct. 23 clash with Purdue, hopes of a perfect season had gone up in smoke in front of a late-arriving but frenzied night crowd at Wisconsin as the Buckeyes spotted their hosts 21 points before rallying and eventually falling by a 31-18 margin.

### Five Years Ago – 2015

For the first time all night, Ezekiel Elliott was laboring.

Ohio State's tailback had delivered another of his signature performances, rushing for 142 yards and two touchdowns to bring his streak of 100-yard games to 13. He had delivered the exclamation point on a sterling 49-7 victory at Rutgers with a 55-yard touchdown early in the fourth quarter.

Elliott's explosive gallop further emptied the crowd of 53,111 at High Point Solutions Stadium, the fourth-largest home crowd in Rutgers program history, giving Ohio State fans free run of the stadium for the final 14 minutes.

About an hour after that run, Elliott faced what was essentially his biggest obstacle of the night. The last Buckeye to leave the field after celebrating with the fans who made the trip for the program's first game at Rutgers, Elliott slowly trudged up the long concrete ramp that led to the visiting locker room. It had just been hosed down, and the star of Ohio State's prolific offense wasn't taking any chances as he made the steep climb.

"It's like a 50-degree angle!" he said with a laugh as reporters breezed past him on the upward trek.

That the postgame trip to the locker room was the most resistance they faced all night was the latest and greatest sign that the Buckeyes were rounding into the form that had made them so great in 2014. Over the previous four hours, Elliott romped and newly minted starting quarterback J.T. Barrett dazzled and the defense delivered championship-caliber play.

### One Year Ago – 2019

Unlike the previous two seasons when Ohio State lost at Iowa and Purdue, the Buckeyes' 2019 campaign would not be defined by an unexplainable loss at the hands of a Big Ten West opponent wearing all-black uniforms.

No, Ohio State's 52-3 thrashing of Northwestern on Oct. 18 actually played out more like the first six wins of the 2019 season. Quarterback Justin Fields threw four touchdown passes, running back J.K. Dobbins rushed for more than 100 yards, and the Buckeye defense held yet another opponent to a season low in both yards and points.

"I'm proud of the way our team came out and played," said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day. "I thought we played with really good energy in all three phases. Our staff did a good job all week, and we played fast the whole game. This was a good way to start off the second half of the season."





Continued From Page 5

Michigan's Jim Harbaugh, have come out in support of. The proposal states that all athletes, regardless of sport, would be granted a one-time transfer exception, allowing them to change schools without sitting out for a season, as the current rule states, so long as there's no tampering, as verified by the athlete and head coach at the new school.

"This proposal creates a uniform, equitable approach for all student-athletes, no matter the sport they play," said working group chair Jon Steinbrecher, commissioner of the Mid-American Conference and vice chair of the Council. "We believe the proposal fulfills the promise of the transfer resolution adopted by the Council in the spring and trust the membership will strongly consider bringing consistency and predictability to Division I transfer regulations while treating student-athletes across all sports alike and in a sensible fashion."

These proposals will spend the next two months in the feedback phase. The Council will receive input from all members, prior to a vote by the Council at the NCAA convention in January. All changes voted on then would be put into place for the 2021-2022 academic year.

### Fields, Davis, Wade Honored By B1G

Ohio State's triumvirate of stars – Fields, offensive guard Wyatt Davis and cornerback Shaun Wade – were selected by the Big Ten in its preseason division honorees list, the 2020 version of a preseason all-conference team, featuring five players from each division.

Joining the Buckeye trio in the East was Michigan defensive end Kwity Paye and Penn State tight end Pat Freiermuth, considered a key piece for the Nittany Lions in their upcoming matchup with the Buckeyes.

In the West, Minnesota quarterback Tanner Morgan and wide receiver Rashod Bateman were picked, as well as Northwestern linebacker Paddy Fisher, Purdue wide receiver Rondale Moore and Wisconsin linebacker Jack Sanborn.

All three Buckeyes were included in the Big Ten's postseason awards ceremony following the 2019 campaign as well. Davis and Fields were included on the first-team all-Big Ten grouping, with Wade checking in on the third-team. Fields also claimed Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year honors.

### Buckeyes Shed Black Stripes

Another batch of newcomers have officially joined the fold, as six freshmen shed their black stripes since BSB last published. On Oct. 19, cornerback Ryan Watts and lineman Jakob James lost theirs, becoming the No. 15 and No. 16 players to lose black stripes, including Oklahoma transfer running back

Trey Sermon.

Watts came to Ohio State as a four-star prospect from Little Elm, Texas, ranked as the No. 202 player and the No. 18 safety in the 247Sports composite.

James, a Cincinnati product, was one of the more unheralded prospects in Ohio State's 2020 class. He came to Columbus as the No. 852 player in the country and No. 55 guard.

On Oct. 20, two more Buckeyes earned the honor, including SMU transfer Corey Rau, who relocated to Ohio State as a walk-on this fall, along with linebacker Cody Simon.

Simon was a four-star prospect coming out of Jersey City, N.J., ranked No. 75 nationally and No. 4 among inside linebackers.

Ohio State's pair of blue-chip freshman quarterbacks, C.J. Stroud and Jack Miller, lost their black stripes at virtually the same time on Oct. 21.

Stroud, a 6-3, 205-pounder from Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., came to Ohio State as the No. 42 overall player and No. 2 pro-style quarterback in the 2020 class.

Miller, a 6-4, 210-pound product of Scottsdale (Az.) Chaparral High School, arrived at Columbus as the No. 334 player nationally and No. 13 pro-style quarterback, coming off an injury-plagued senior season.

Given the two videos were posted within seconds of each other, it seems as though Ohio State doesn't want to give out any hints about which quarterback is leading in the battle to serve as Fields' backup that Stroud, Miller and fifth-year senior Gunnar Hoak have been engaged in since the abbreviated spring camp started back in March, though Miller was the one who came on in relief of Fields late in the Nebraska game. Hoak has never officially lost his black stripe, but he no longer appears to have it, meaning that he could have shed it without a formal announcement on Twitter.

### Tennis Adds New Assistant Coach

After losing longtime volunteer assistant David Schilling to Denison over the summer, the Ohio State men's tennis program landed a replacement on Oct. 16, when head coach Ty Tucker announced that Hunter Callahan would be taking over the position moving forward.

Callahan is a familiar face in Columbus. He played for Tucker from 2011-2015, spent three years playing professionally and then was a volunteer coach at Duquesne in 2018.

"We are excited to have Hunter join the program as a volunteer assistant coach," said Tucker. "He understands the importance of hard work in the classroom and on the court that comes with being a Buckeye. Having won a national title with us as a player in 2014, he will be a tremendous resource for our student-athletes. Coach (Justin) Kronauge and I look forward to the daily grind of college tennis with an amazing young coach."

After taking over as a volunteer coach, Callahan quickly worked his way up the ladder at Duquesne. He was promoted to the women's assistant coach role, before taking over as associate head coach for both programs in 2019.

During his career at Ohio State, Callahan played a major role in helping the Buckeyes claim the 2014 ITA National Team Indoors title and earned a spot on the all-tournament team. He's now the second former Tucker player on the staff, joining associate head coach Kronauge, who concluded his playing career at Ohio State in 2010 and joined the program as a coach shortly after.

"I am extremely honored and excited to be back at The Ohio State University, but this time as a coach," said Callahan. "I want to thank Ty Tucker and Justin Kronauge for

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"We want to thank the many BSB readers who have stepped up and shown their support for Buckeye Sports Bulletin through the VIP program," BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz said. "It is a true vote of confidence in what we are doing now and what we have done the previous 39 years."

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## BSB Podcast Enhances Online Coverage

Buckeye Sports Bulletin has launched a podcast to work in tandem with BuckeyeSports.com to keep BSB subscribers informed on all of the latest around Ohio State football, basketball, recruiting and everything else.

The Buckeye Sports Bulletin Podcast covers Ohio State from all angles, with input from beat writers who cover everything from football and recruiting to men's volleyball and women's hockey, and everything in-between. With BSB's deep Rolodex of former Buckeye players, coaches and college sports analysts around the country, as well as in-house experts Joe Dempsey and Andrew Lind, the BSB podcast has you covered on all things Buckeye, all the time. Staffers Patrick Mayhorn and Wyatt Crosher host with a constantly rotating guest list to get insight and analysis on the latest in Ohio State news.

With Ohio State's 2020 season under way, the BSB podcast has moved to two shows a week: a preview show released at 10 a.m. on the Friday before each game and a recap show released on the following Monday, reacting to all of the action in the latest Buckeye game. Those preview shows feature an in-depth interview with a beat writer who covers Ohio State's upcoming opponent, to provide the best possible insight on the matchup for the Buckeyes.

The show is free for all listeners. To find the show, go to your favorite podcast app or website and type in "Buckeye Sports Bulletin Podcast," and click the subscribe button. You can listen on Amazon Music, Apple Podcasts, Audible, Google Podcasts, iHeartRadio, Podbean, Spotify, Stitcher, YouTube and anywhere else that podcasts are found.

For those of you who are new to the podcast world, the show is also posted at 10 a.m. every Friday on BuckeyeSports.com, as well as in the BSB Fan Forum. The recap shows will be posted every Monday morning, at the same time as the Friday previews.

believing in me and giving me a chance to be a part of this great program. Being able to coach alongside Ty and Justin and mentor the great student-athletes that we have at Ohio State is an amazing opportunity."

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This is the time of year when we suggest that readers consider upgrading their BSB delivery to first-class mail for football season. We traditionally recommend it for out-of-state readers in particular, and many of you upgrade annually.

In these unique times, we are recommending the upgrade even more vigorously. With the pandemic, the post office is more short-

handed than ever, and that is coupled with the expected crush of absentee and mail-in ballots in this election year. You can see how your BSB might get lost in the shuffle.

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**"Your Head to Toe Buckeye Source"**



# Garrett Plays Despite Offseason Gunshot Injury

Continued From Page 1

I missed it. I think our players missed it. There's nothing we can do about it, but let's not kid ourselves either. It's a fun environment when the 'Shoe's rocking. It's one of the best places in the world to coach a football game or watch a football game."

In addition to the limited capacity, Ohio State did not allow tailgating around the stadium prior to the game. There was no Skull Session at St. John Arena, no Brutus Buckeye and no Script Ohio performed by the marching band on the field before the game. But that lack of atmosphere is something the Buckeyes will have to overcome this season if they want to compete for a Big Ten title and national championship.

"It was a strange feeling," said Ohio State head coach Ryan Day. "I can't sit here and say it wasn't different. It was. Guys were making huge plays, and I felt like looking around and saying, 'Anybody just see that?' Usually, there would be 107,000 people going crazy and fireworks being shot off.

"It was different, but it's the same for both teams. We just have to handle it better than our opponents, and that's really what the focus is."



ANDREW LIND

**A MIRACLE** – Ohio State senior defensive end Haskell Garrett (92) celebrates with his teammates after recording a sack of Nebraska quarterback Adrian Martinez in the second quarter of the Buckeyes' 52-17 win over the Cornhuskers. The play came a little less than two months after Garrett was shot in the face.

## Garrett Makes Impact

When Ohio State senior defensive tackle Haskell Garrett suffered a gunshot wound to the face on Aug. 30 when he

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reportedly attempted to break up an argument between a man and a woman just off campus, some wondered if that meant the end of his football career.

"I would have thought season over, career over," Coombs said on Sept. 22.

Turns out, Garrett didn't miss a single game.

The 6-2, 299-pound Garrett came off the bench for the Buckeyes on their third defensive series of the game and then recorded Ohio State's first sack of the season late in the second quarter, putting the Cornhuskers in a third-and-long situation. The Cornhuskers were unable to convert and had to punt the ball back to the Buckeyes, who promptly scored to extend their three-point lead to 24-14 just before halftime.

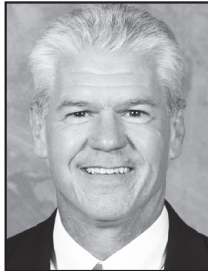
"I think it was good to get him out there," Day said. "The depth is certainly something we've been focused on, so to have him there was a huge boost to the inside guys. I don't know how many plays he ended up getting in there for, but his experience and his ability made it great to

have him in there."

Garrett finished the game with a modest two tackles, including the sack and a tackle for loss, but his presence was described by Coombs as a miracle.

"This kid was shot in the face," Coombs said, noting he gave Garrett a massive hug in the locker room after the game. "I don't know how many days ago, but it wasn't that long ago. And he just never gave up. He kept coming in. My office is right across the hall from (defensive line coach) Larry Johnson's, and he was meeting with Larry with stitches in, learning and preparing without being able to do anything physically.

"For him to do that and then be able to play – and I can't tell you how he played because I don't know that until I watch the tape – but having him on the field was a difference-maker for the Buckeyes in every way, shape or form. You can't overvalue the impact on his teammates and the defense in general (in terms of) the experience he went through and how he got back on the field."



Kerry Coombs

# The Numbers Game

## Ohio State 52, Nebraska 17

Oct. 24, 2020 – Ohio Stadium, Columbus, OH

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
NEBRASKA	7	7	3	0	17
OHIO STATE	14	10	14	14	52

### First Quarter

NEB – Martinez, 10-yard run (Culp kick), 13:09; 4 plays, 75 yards, 1:51 TOP.

OSU – Teague, 1-yard run (Haubeil kick), 8:04; 11 plays, 75 yards, 5:05 TOP.

OSU – Wilson, 42-yard pass from Fields (Haubeil kick), 4:02; 6 plays, 76 yards, 2:18 TOP.

### Second Quarter

NEB – Mills, 3-yard run (Culp kick), 8:24; 11 plays, 78 yards, 5:17 TOP.

OSU – Haubeil, 34-yard field goal, 3:12; 11 plays, 71 yards, 5:07 TOP.

OSU – Teague, 6-yard run (Haubeil kick), 1:10; 5 plays, 46 yards, 1:15 TOP.

### Third Quarter

OSU – Fields, 17-yard run (Haubeil kick), 11:24; 8 plays, 75 yards, 3:36 TOP.

OSU – Banks, 55-yard fumble return (Haubeil kick), 8:02.

NEB – Culp, 22-yard field goal, 3:56; 9 plays, 72 yards, 4:00 TOP.

### Fourth Quarter

OSU – Smith-Njigba, 5-yard pass from Fields (Haubeil kick), 9:58; 7 plays, 42 yards, 3:18 TOP.

OSU – Miller, 2-yard run (Haubeil kick), 0:18; 6 plays, 40 yards, 2:35 TOP.

Att. – 1,344

Weather – 46 degrees, mostly cloudy; wind N 8 mph

### Team Statistics

	NEB	OSU
First Downs	17	28
Rushing	11	13
Passing	6	12
Penalty	0	3
Rushes-Yards	36-217	48-222
Passing Yards	160	276
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	16-20-0	20-21-0
Offensive Plays	56	69
Total Net Yards	377	498
Third Down Efficiency	4-10	8-13
Punts-Avg.	5-44.6	2-49.0
Fumbles-Lost	3-2	2-1
Penalties	8-90	3-14
Time of Possession	26:46	33:14

### Individual Statistics

**RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.)** – NEB: McCaffrey 9-87; Martinez 12-77; Mills 10-33; Thompkins 4-22; TEAM 1-(-2). OSU: Sermon 11-55; Fields 15-54; Teague 12-41; Chambers 4-32; Miller 2-23; Johnson 4-17.

**PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD)** – NEB: Martinez 12-15-0-105-0; McCaffrey 4-5-0-55-0. OSU: Fields 20-21-0-276-2.

**RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.)** – NEB: Robinson 6-49; Allen 2-30; Stoll 2-24; Johnson 1-17; Brown 1-16; Thompkins 1-10; Falck 1-8; McCaffrey 1-5; Rafdal 1-1. OSU: Wilson 7-129; Olave 6-104; Smith-Njigba 2-5; Fleming 1-13; Williams 1-7; Sermon 1-7; Ruckert 1-6; Farrell 1-5.

**PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long)** – NEB: Przystup 5-44.6-51. OSU: Chrisman 2-49.0-52.

**PUNT RETURNS (No.-Avg.-Long.)** – NEB: None. OSU: Wilson 2-11.5-22.

**KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Avg.-Long.)** NEB: Johnson 3-18-22. OSU: McCall 1-10-10; Wilson 1-4-4.

**MISSED FIELD GOALS** – NEB: None. OSU: None.

**FORCED FUMBLES** – NEB: Newsome. OSU: Gant.

**FUMBLE RECOVERIES** – NEB: Domann 1-0. OSU: Banks 1-55; Proctor 1-0.

**INTERCEPTIONS** – NEB: None. OSU: None.

**SACKS** – NEB: Honas 2.0-14; Tannor 1.0-7. OSU: Garrett 1.0-5; Henry-Young 1.0-4; Harrison 1.0-1.

**TACKLES FOR LOSS** – NEB: Honas 2.0-14; Miller 1.5-3; Tannor 1.0-7; Robinson 1.0-2; Stille 0.5-0. OSU: Garrett 1.0-5; Proctor 1.0-5; Werner 1.0-4; Henry-Young 1.0-4; Harrison 1.0-1.

**TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.)** – NEB: Honas 6-1-7; Dismuke 5-2-7; Miller 3-4-7; Domann 3-3-6; Bootle 5-0-5; Williams 5-0-5; Newsome 3-1-4; Taylor-Britt 3-2-5; Tannor 2-2-4; Rogers 2-2-4; Stille 2-1-3; Robinson 1-2-3; Green 1-1-2; Payne 0-2-2; Pola-Gates 1-0-1; Nelson 1-0-1; Piper 1-0-1; Daniels 1-0-1; Farmer 0-1-1; Snodgrass 0-1-1; Henrich 0-1-1. OSU: Werner 4-3-7; Browning 3-2-5; Borland 3-2-5; Williamson 4-0-4; Hooker 4-0-4; Gant 3-0-3; Proctor 3-0-3; Togiai 1-2-3; Wade 2-0-2; Mitchell 2-0-2; Harrison 1-1-2; Garrett 2-0-2; Cooper 0-2-2; Young 1-0-1; Booker 1-0-1; Wilburn 1-0-1; Ransom 1-0-1; McCall 1-0-1; Jackson 1-0-1; Watts 1-0-1; Henry-Young 1-0-1; Friday 0-1-1; Banks 0-1-1; Jean-Baptiste 0-1-1; TEAM 0-1-1.

### Players In The Game

NEB – Robinson, Martinez, Mills, Jurgens, Benhart, Wilson, Farniok, Jaimes, Warner, Stoll, Falck, Honas, Taylor-Britt, Bootle, Williams, Dismuke, Domann, Miller, Nelson, Daniels, Stille, Robinson, Delancey, Tannor, Mauga-Clements, Pola-Gates, Green, Brown, Fleming, Newsome, McCaffrey, Allen, Lynum, Johnson, Farmer, Crawford, Gifford, THompkins, Culp, Otte, Belt, Snodgrass, Henrich, Payne, Piper, Gaylord, Farniok, Cocronan, Sichterman, Bando, Banks, Hixson, Rafdal, Vokolek, Liewer, Hickman, Przystup, Pieper, Wildeman, Mueller, Thomas, Rogers. OSU – Fields, Olave, Wilson, Teague, Davis, Myers, Munford, Miller, Petit-Frere, Ruckert, Farrell, Cooper, Smith, Browning, Jackson, Banks, Werner, Williamson, Hooker, Wade, Borland, Friday, Watts, Ransom, Shaw, Sinclair, Wade, DiMaccio, Young, Mitchell, McCall, Fleming, Cage, Williams, Babb, Jean-Baptiste, Sermon, Miller, Harrison, Smith-Njigba, Scott, Hickman, Stover, Gant, Chambers, Johnson, Brown, Rossi, Pope, Proctor, McFarquhar, Kacherski, Gurd, Wilburn, Wypler, Jones Hamdan, Hamilton, Henry-Ypung, Vimahi, Togiai, Wray, Johnson, Jones, Booker, Chrisman, Garrett, Haubeil, Potter.

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# Buckeyes Overcome Slow Start To Win Big

After more than 300 days of waiting to play its next football game, Ohio State did not start out its season opener against Nebraska on the right foot.

Just 111 seconds into the game, the Buckeyes found themselves trailing after a four-play, 75-yard drive ended with a 10-yard touchdown run by Cornhuskers junior quarterback Adrian Martinez. Martinez is the same quarterback who gave Ohio State trouble in his last trip to Ohio Stadium, when he threw for 266 yards, ran for another 72 and had three total touchdowns as a true freshman in a 36-31 Buckeye win on Nov. 3, 2018.

## GAME NOTEBOOK Wyatt Crosher

The 7-0 deficit immediately forced the Buckeyes to make some defensive adjustments, which they did on the way to a lopsided 52-17 victory, but Ohio State head coach Ryan Day did give credit to Nebraska for stumping the Buckeyes early on.

"Nebraska came out and played a really good game," Day said in a postgame Zoom call with the media on Oct. 24. "I thought they had a really good plan early on, and I thought that they kind of had us

reeling a little bit early on. Give credit to our defensive staff and players for being able to adjust and really, by the end of the first half and then into the second half, I thought they made really good adjustments and played really good football."

Ohio State defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs echoed Day's comments, both applauding the Cornhuskers' game plan to open the game while also admitting that the Buckeyes have some areas to work on moving forward.

"I think there are things that are concerning, I wouldn't disagree with that, and I do think it was a slow start," Coombs said. "I think they're a good team, I think they're a good offense, and I think that anytime you're spending a summer trying to get ready for somebody and you don't know exactly what they're going to do, new coordinator, different things, it's challenging. I thought that (co-defensive coordinator) Greg Mattison and (defensive line coach) Larry Johnson did a great job making some adjustments and having great communication about how we were doing some things differently in the run game."

Following Nebraska's opening touchdown drive, Ohio State drove the ball 75 yards in 11 plays, including a fourth-down conversion on a completion by quarterback Justin Fields to sophomore wide receiver Garrett Wilson, and ultimately

reached the end zone on a 1-yard run by sophomore running back Master Teague.

Ohio State would score again on the following drive, this time on a 42-yard connection between Fields and Wilson, and after a 3-yard score by Nebraska running back Dedrick Mills, the Buckeyes took over, scoring 38 of the final 41 points to end the game with a dominant final score.

Day said the game started to shift in Ohio State's favor late in the second quarter, when Teague was able to score again with 1:10 to play before halftime to give the Buckeyes a 10-point lead. Then, when Ohio State scored again to open the second half, and then again on a 55-yard fumble recovery by junior cornerback Sevyn Banks to make it 38-14, that momentum was more than enough for the Buckeyes to hold on for the win.

"The stop we got at the end of the first half, and then when we get into the two-minute drill, we score, we come back, score with the first drive of the second half, and then quickly get a fumble return and a defensive touchdown. That's one heck of a run right there," Day said. "That's the best way you can end a half and start a half, and I thought that flipped the game."

Fields agreed with Day, citing the opening third-quarter drive that ended in a 17-yard rushing score for the third-year

quarterback as the ultimate momentum shifter in the game.

"When we came out on that first drive of the second half and scored, I think that's when we started getting more momentum," Field said. "The first half was a little bit slow, but I think when we came out the second half and got that first drive going and scored that touchdown, I think that's when we started to get it going."

After allowing seven points and 18.8 yards per play on the opening drive, Ohio State's defense gave up just 10 points and 5.8 yards per play the rest of the game.

"I'm so impressed with these kids," Coombs said. "They don't panic, they take the adjustments, they understand, they learn, and they go out and put them in place. I thought they did a really, really good job after the first couple of series."

### Fields' Heisman Hopes Get Strong Start

With a full offseason of being called one of the two best quarterbacks in college football and a near lock to become a top-five pick in the 2021 NFL draft, Fields lived up to all the hype in his first game of the 2020 season.

After starting off by completing his first 11 passes, the former five-star prospect out of Kennesaw (Ga.) Harrison finished the day hitting on 20 of his 21 passing attempts for 276 yards and two touchdowns. His 95.2 percent completion percentage matched that of Wisconsin's



Adrian Martinez



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# Game Analysis

## What Worked Well

Ohio State junior quarterback Justin Fields started off the first game of his second season as a collegiate starter with a bang, completing 20 of his 21 passes for 276 yards and two touchdowns, with his lone miss being a drop in the end zone, while also rushing for 54 yards and another touchdown on 15 carries. Fields had two major targets through the air – junior wide receiver Chris Olave and sophomore wide receiver Garrett Wilson – who combined for 13 catches, 233 yards and a touchdown in the game. Wilson specifically stood out, leading the team in catches (seven) and yards (129), connecting with Fields on a 42-yard score. In six red-zone trips, the Buckeyes scored five touchdowns and a field goal. On defense, the Buckeyes allowed just 160 yards through the air and forced a pair of lost fumbles, holding Nebraska to just 17 points on the game. Even further, Ohio State allowed just 10 points in the final 58:09 of the game.

## What Didn't Work

The first 1:51 of the game, however, did show some problems for the Buckeyes. Nebraska ran just four plays on its opening drive: a 9-yard completion by quarterback Adrian Martinez, a 9-yard rush by Martinez, a 47-yard run by backup quarterback Luke McCaffrey and another 10-yard rush by Martinez, with the last of those plays ending in a touchdown and an early 7-0 deficit for Ohio State. The Buckeyes nearly gave the Cornhuskers the ball back with a lead, but Ohio State head coach Ryan Day elected to go for it on a fourth-

and-5 from the Nebraska 30. That play succeeded, and four plays later, the Buckeyes tied the game.

Offensively, Ohio State struggled running the ball, with Oklahoma transfer running back Trey Sermon leading the way with 55 yards on 11 carries, though two runs of 16 and 18 yards in the second half helped to boost his overall yards per carry. Master Teague started for Ohio State and scored twice but had just 41 yards on 12 rushes. The most efficient rusher in the game, aside from quarterback Jack Miller, who ran only two times for 23 yards and a touchdown, was redshirt freshman Steele Chambers, who earned 32 yards on four carries.

## Play Of The Game

Ohio State threatened to take control of the game after a 17-yard rushing touchdown by Fields that included a nifty spin move to open the third quarter. At that point, the Buckeyes led by 17 (31-14) and Nebraska needed to answer on the following drive to gain some momentum. Instead, after earning a pair of first downs and getting into Ohio State territory, Martinez fumbled the ball on second-and-3. The ball was then recovered by junior cornerback Sevyn Banks, who stumbled for the majority of the run but stayed up all the way for a 55-yard touchdown to pretty much put an end to Nebraska's upset hopes. After the defensive score, Ohio State outscored the Cornhuskers 14-3 the rest of the way for a 1-0 start and a 35-point victory. Banks had just one tackle to go with his fumble recovery on the game.

– Wyatt Crosher

Graham Mertz from the Badgers' dominant victory over Illinois on Oct. 23 and was the second-best completion rate in Big Ten history, minimum 15 attempts, trailing only a 21-of-22 performance (95.5 percent) by Minnesota quarterback Tanner Morgan against Purdue last season.

Fields' lone incompleteness came in the second quarter on a 43-yard post route to junior wide receiver Chris Olave. The ball was where it needed to be, but Olave was not able to come down with it amid solid coverage.

"I thought Justin played well," Day said. "He didn't force anything, did a good job with his feet, was accurate, and I think the only incompleteness he had, someone told me was just on the post to Chris. We had a couple of sacks in there that maybe we can throw the ball away, but the good news overall is that we have something to work on. So now we have to get on the film and get better."

Fields was sacked three times for a total of 21 yards in the game. Without those tacked on to his rushing stats, he ran the ball 12 times for 75 yards and a score.

Junior guard Wyatt Davis, who returned to the Buckeyes this offseason after previously opting out, knows that the pass protection must be a focus heading into a pivotal game next weekend on the road in Happy Valley.

"It definitely needs to be fixed moving forward, especially going against Penn State," Davis said. "They got us on some stunts up front with some blitzes and we have to look back at the film. It's not acceptable and we're going to fix it because moving down the line, if we want to do what we want to do, we can't afford to give up sacks like that against blitzes and just sacks period. So we're going to move on from this and take it, and keep that burning desire to get better this week and have an intent focus on truly sharpening our technique and just being aware of what the defense is going to bring."

Despite the sacks, Fields flourished when he was able to throw the ball, and that was much in thanks to a pair of wide-outs. Olave, even with the lone incompleteness being a target to him, had a big game to start his junior season, finishing with six receptions for 104 yards.

It was a very strong showing, but it was outdone by Wilson, who caught all seven of his targets for a team-high 129 yards and a touchdown. The duo combined for 65 percent of the catches and 84.4 percent of the team's passing yards on the day.

There was a scare with Olave in the

third quarter, when he took a hard hit to the head by Quinton Newsome that led to a fumble. Olave left the game and did not return, but Day sounded optimistic about the health of his top receiver from a season ago.

"He seemed good, he was in good spirits, had a good look in his eye, and that's all I really know at this point," Day said. "We'll see what happens tomorrow morning."

Though Olave and Wilson made up the vast majority of the production through the air, neither of them made the highlight catch of the game. That came from true freshman wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba, who performed a spectacular toe-tap in the back of the end zone for a 5-yard touchdown.

Smith-Njigba, a former five-star prospect, had only two catches for 5 yards in the game, but he already showed what made him one of the top recruits in the country in the 2020 class, even if Fields could not see for himself if he was able to keep a foot inbounds or not.

"I didn't see it, actually," Fields said. "After I threw it, I got hit pretty hard, so I was just hoping that he caught it and got in. But I had no idea if he got his foot down or not."

## Buckeyes Face Some Rushing Woes

While the pass game appeared to be firing on all cylinders, the same could not be said about Ohio State's rushing attack.

The Buckeyes ran 48 times for 222 yards and four touchdowns, and while those numbers do not stand out as a glaring weakness, much of the success came late in the second half. Ohio State had 24 carries in each half but ran for just 90 yards (3.8 yards per carry) in the first two quarters compared to 132 yards (5.5 average) in the final two quarters.

But Day compared the struggles on the ground to the struggles Ohio State had against Florida Atlantic in the 2019 season opener. In that game, J.K. Dobbins ran for just 91 yards on 21 carries, the first game in a record-breaking year when he ran for 2,003 yards and 21 touchdowns.

"Against FAU it was a little clunky. I remember that," Day said. "It was just kind of nothing fit right, and I think that happens sometimes when you're used to going against a certain front for months at a time and seeing the same looks and the same fronts."

"Nebraska brings a bunch of different stuff, and it was a little bit of a different fit. I thought we did fit some runs good there. That one drive on the goal line, we ran the ball pretty good in there, couple of them different hit the way that we wanted them to. But we did throw the ball a little bit more in this game, but we'll take a look at the film and see."

"The offensive line still played really well. I thought they knocked people off the ball, and there were still some good runs in there, but we'll improve, we'll get better from this."



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# Fields Passes Test In 52-17 Win Over Huskers

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

Justin Fields waited a long time to state his case for the Heisman Trophy, but it was worth it with a nearly flawless performance when he threw and ran No. 5 Ohio State to a 52-17 victory over Nebraska at a nearly empty Ohio Stadium on Oct. 24 in the long-delayed season opener for both teams because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fields, in his second season after transferring from Georgia, completed 20 of 21 passes for 276 yards and two touchdowns with sophomore Garrett Wilson his favorite target (seven catches, 129 yards, one TD).

The only miss for Fields was when junior Chris Olave had the ball dislodged in the end zone in the second quarter on his 12th pass attempt.

Fields' 17-yard run gave the Buckeyes a 31-14 lead in the third quarter. That was quickly followed by a 55-yard fumble recovery and return for a TD by junior cornerback Sevyn Banks to make it 38-14 and cap a run of 24 straight points.

Nebraska took a 7-0 lead on the first series of the game and the score was tied 14-14 before a 34-yard field by senior Blake Haubeil and third-year sophomore Master Teague's 6-yard run gave the Buckeyes the 24-14 halftime lead.

The season was originally scheduled to start the first weekend in September but

was canceled by the Big Ten on Aug. 11 only to be reversed a month later.

The attendance was listed as 1,344 – mainly relatives of players and staff from each team in accordance with Big Ten protocol.

"I was looking up to the stands to celebrate with the fans, but there was nobody out there," Fields said.

The final score was not unlike the previous five games in the series, all OSU wins, by an average of 53.0-18.6.

## How It Happened

Nebraska rammed the ball down Ohio State's throat for the 7-0 lead only 1:51 into the game after the drive began at the Huskers' 25 following the touchback on the opening kickoff for the gray, 46-degree noon kickoff.

The Cornhuskers' four-play series began with a 9-yard pass to Jack Stoll. QB Adrian Martinez gained 9 on a run before backup quarterback Luke McCaffrey lined up in the backfield, took the handoff from Martinez and bolted 47 yards to the 10. Martinez ran it in from there.

The Buckeyes tied it 7-7, using 5:05 to go 75 yards, on their first series when Teague pushed his way in from the 1. The biggest of the 11 plays was a fourth-and-5 conversion from the Nebraska 30 when Fields found Wilson for 14 yards to the 16. On the previous play, Fields rushed for 11 yards to make up for a 5-yard sack and a 1-yard Teague loss that left OSU with a third-and-16 from the 41.

After Wilson's second catch of the drive (he had a 24-yarder on the third play), Teague had two carries for 6 yards and Fields ran for 9 to set up the score.

A Nebraska three-and-out led to Ohio State's next score to make it 14-7. The Buckeyes went 76 yards in 2:18, sparked by a 16-yard reception by Olave two plays prior to Fields connecting on a scoring strike to Wilson for 42 yards with 4:02 left in the first.

Nebraska tied it 14-14 at the 8:24 mark of the second quarter with a 3-yard run by Dedrick Mills. Martinez completed 3 of 4 passes on the 11-play, 78-yard drive as he hit Stoll for 15 and Austin Allen for 26 that put the ball on the OSU 14. The QB ran twice for 11 yards before the TD.

OSU squandered an 11-play drive and had to settle for a 34-yard field goal by Blake Haubeil for a 17-14 advantage with 3:12 left in the first half despite an early gamble that had Fields sneak for 3 on fourth-and-1 from the OSU 33.

Olave had two catches for 41 yards, and Wilson's 13-yard grab gave the Buckeyes a first down at the Nebraska 22, but for the third time in the game the Buckeyes could not convert a third-and-short, leaving them a yard shy. They went for it but an illegal formation penalty on Wilson forced the three-pointer.

Penalties helped Ohio State go ahead 24-14 on Teague's 6-yard run with 1:10 left in the second quarter.

A face mask on the Nebraska punt put OSU at the Huskers' 46. On second down, Fields had his only incompletion when Olave couldn't hold onto the ball in the end zone when it was jarred free by cornerback Dicaprio Bootle. Wilson then had an 11-yard reception, and on the next play a pass interference on Nebraska cornerback Cam Taylor-Britt placed the ball on the 17. Teague then broke free for 11 and was called upon again for the scoring run.

Fields was 12 of 13 for 187 yards and rushed 10 times for 46 yards in the first half.

## Assuming Control

Fields extended the lead to 31-14 on the first series of the third quarter, scrambling out of the pocket to score at the left pylon after a 17-yard run with 11:24 remaining.

Wilson had two catches for 25 yards, and Oklahoma transfer Trey Sermon had a 16-yard run in the snap preceding the score.

It didn't take long to make it 38-14. On Nebraska's next series Banks scooped up a Martinez fumble forced by graduate defensive end Jonathon Cooper and

sprinted 55 yards to score at 8:02.

"That was one heck of a run there," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said of increasing a 17-14 lead late in the second quarter. "That's the best way you could end a half and start a half, and I thought that flipped the game."

Nebraska finally broke OSU's stranglehold with a 22-yard field goal by Connor Culp with 3:56 left in the third for a 38-17 score, but the Cornhuskers wasted a 39-yard run by Martinez that set up a first-and-goal at the 8.

True freshman receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba made his presence felt with a spectacular touchdown catch to increase the margin to 45-17 with 9:58 to play after Wilson's 22-yard punt return started the series at the Nebraska 42.

The drive was aided by a targeting call against safety Deontai Williams on Njigba that gave the Buckeyes the ball at the Huskers 17. Williams was ejected, as was Britt-Taylor for the same call in the third quarter.

On Njigba's score, he went up for an overthrown ball and somehow grabbed it while barely getting his right foot down at the back of the end zone. The play was initially ruled incomplete but overturned after a review.

True freshman QB Jack Miller added the final points with a 2-yard TD run with 18 seconds left. Earlier in the drive on his first career carry, he ran 21 yards to the 12.

Day apologized after the game for running a play instead of taking a knee.

After the kickoff, McCaffrey completed two passes to the Nebraska 48 to end the game.

## Numbers

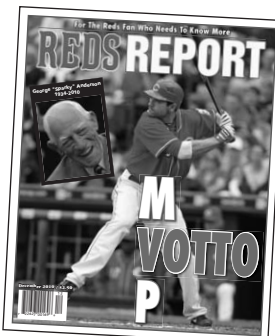
Fields had 54 net yards rushing on 15 attempts but was sacked three times for 21 yards. ... Sermon topped OSU with 55 yards on 11 totes, and Teague contributed 41 yards and the two TDs via 12 rushes. Steele Chambers added 32 yards on four carries in the second half. ... The Buckeyes averaged 4.6 yards per attempt; Nebraska averaged 6.0, led by McCaffrey's 87 on nine tries and Martinez's 77 on 12 runs. ... Olave had six grabs for 104 yards. ... Martinez was 12 of 15 for 105 yards. McCaffrey gained 55 yards through the air by connecting on 4 of 5. ... OSU had 498 total yards (276 pass, 222 run) compared to 377 (217 run, 160 pass) for Nebraska. ... Linebacker Pete Werner had seven tackles (four solo) for the Buckeyes, and . Haskell Garrett, Zach Harrison and Darrion Henry-Young each had a sack for total of 10 yards.

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# BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 52, Nebraska 17

**Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on the Buckeyes' victory:** "The No. 1 goal is to go 1-0, and I think that's the tricky thing here at Ohio State. It doesn't matter how you win, it's just a matter if you win. And the best thing we can do is apologize for how we win, and to beat a Big Ten team like Nebraska 52-17, I mean that's a pretty impressive day just to beat them by 1. So sure, the expectations are high, but the reality of it is just to go 1-0 is a great day, and that was the No. 1 goal."

**Day on the performance of Ohio State's defense:** "If someone said to me, 'If you hold them to 17 points, would you take that?' I would have signed on the dotted line. I thought very well done, job well done. They hit a couple big plays on us and everything, but overall, I thought they did a really good job and I'm proud of the way the guys played."

**Day on Ohio State's linebackers contributing to the turnaround:** "We have such veteran guys at linebacker that, when they can recognize what's going on and then adjust in game like they did, that's big, and so I thought we did that."

**Ohio State defensive coordinator Kerry Combs on the effectiveness of Nebraska's quarterbacks in the running game:** "I don't think early on in the game we were handling it very well, and the manner in which they were doing it, and so I think that we came in, particularly at halftime, and made a couple of adjustments that I thought were very effective in the second half."

**Ohio State junior guard Wyatt Davis on how close the team was to missing the season entirely:** "That was the first thing that I was thinking about when I woke up this morning, like, wow, I can't believe that a couple months ago that it really seemed like this wasn't going to happen. I was just so grateful that I was able to get reinstated and that we were able to get the ball rolling with the Big Ten. And I'm just really thankful for the opportunity and everyone behind it, Coach Day, Coach (Gene) Smith, and our president (Kristina Johnson) coming along and really vouching for us. It is definitely a blessing."

**Davis on Ohio State's early struggles:** "Ten months not having a game and then we go into one and there was so much confusion, us being away from the program. But honestly that's what comes with the first game. They were well-coached, they had a great scheme for us, and we just have to look at the film and just adjust moving forward. But credit to them because they came out swinging and they got us for a little bit, but we responded and swung back."

**Davis on Ohio State's running game:** "I really do believe that once we get rolling, our running game will be back to and even better than what it was last year. I just think that we have to knock off the rust of not playing against another team and just really focus this week on

film and what we did wrong and how we can get better, really focusing on the little things."

**Ohio State junior quarterback Justin Fields on sophomore wide receiver Garrett Wilson's performance in the slot:** "Garrett's just a great receiver all around, and I think him being in the slot, him being able to work outside and inside and him being able to go different directions, I think that just makes him more dynamic. So just him being in that slot definitely makes our team better and he's definitely a great receiver."

**Nebraska coach Scott Frost on how his team matched up with the Buckeyes:** "I thought we definitely matched up better than we did a year ago. To beat a team and to take control of the league and your destiny and be able to win those games, you need some veteran guys that are able to look those types of teams in the eye and go out and whup 'em. I think we've got a lot of guys that are ready to do that, and we need some more."

**Frost on how the Huskers matched up with the Buckeyes compared to last season:** "We hung in with them a lot better than we did last year physically, and I give a ton of credit to them. That's a really good team, but I was proud of how our kids fought."

**Frost on Nebraska's miscues:** "I thought we did a lot of good things. Unfortunately, some of the things that led to the game getting out of hand were self-inflicting things that we can fix. We had too many penalties. They didn't have hardly any. We turned the ball over a couple times with the quarterback running. We got them in a couple second-and-really longs and gave up first downs on third-and-14s. We can fix a lot of those things as a group."

**Frost on what went wrong for Nebraska:** "At the end of the second quarter, we got the ball back down 17-14 and a chance to go take the lead before half and kind of shot ourselves in the foot with the delay-of-game penalty. That's my fault. And a holding penalty, or I can't remember what happened next, and they score quick before half and then score coming out of half. And that's the game."

**Nebraska junior quarterback Adrian Martinez on what went wrong for the Huskers:** "The first half I thought we did a pretty good job, we came out aggressive. And I think we continued to do that in the second half but made mistakes that we can't make against a really good team in Ohio State. I'm proud of our guys for continuing to fight, and I believe we didn't give up. We continued to fight there, no matter who was in the game. We've just got to limit some of the mistakes, the small errors and work on what we did today."

**Frost on the performance of the Husker offense:** "I thought we had a really good game

plan. (Offensive coordinator) Coach (Matt) Lubick made us better. We stopped ourselves a lot today, between penalties and sacks. When we played clean drives, we executed pretty well and moved the ball well."

**Frost on the need to gain more yards in the passing game:** "We still as a program need to be able to push the ball downfield better. There's no question about that. When you watch the speed they have at wide receiver and the shots they take and the deep balls they hit, when you hit those, those are big plays. And even when you don't hit them, you're backing people up and keeping people honest. We have a ways to go to be able to be that kind of threat, to hit a home run in the passing game, but I thought the guys executed the game plan we had very well."

**Martinez on playing in an empty stadium:** "Initially it was a little weird, but once you're on the field playing football, I really didn't notice it too much. You're kind of in the zone. You're locked in to your assignment and the guys across from you. From that standpoint, it wasn't really that different. The in-between moments when the crowd can get loud and you come off to the sideline and you see them, it was a little bit bizarre in that way, but our guys were ready. We didn't need any more juice than we already had."

**Fifth-year senior Nebraska linebacker Collin Miller on the physicality in the game:** "Guys were itching to go out there and play football. You could kind of see and feel that on both sides, actually. Ohio State players were ready to hit. We were ready to hit. Going into half it was 24-14. And then after the penalty in the end zone, they threw a touchdown and then they got the ball back and we kind of beat ourselves with another penalty. Definitely this year, I think that playing with Ohio State like that, the No. 5 team in the country, they're physical. We were trying to be physical as well."

**Fifth-year senior Huskers linebacker JoJo Domann on balancing physicality and avoiding penalties:** "We have to be physical when it's time to be physical, in the box, particularly. And we've got to be smart when it's hits outside the box like that on defenseless receivers, keeping our heads up, using our shoulders, just being smart like that. It's tough when bullets are flying, but we're football players, and we can do that."

**Miller on how difficult it is to stop Ohio State:** "They're not going to beat themselves. I think they had 14 penalty yards to our 90. Justin Fields is going to be a first-round draft pick. You guys saw the arm that we saw. He's making throws that guys on Sundays make. Major credit to the offensive line, those guys are all on the same page, real physical. They've got the wide receivers that can catch the balls and are athletic enough to make plays once they catch it. Justin Fields and that offensive line, pretty good."

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# Olave On Road To Redemption After Fiesta Bowl

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

Chris Olave thought Justin Fields started to scramble, so he broke off his post route with Ohio State trailing Clemson by six points with 43 seconds left in the College Football Playoff semifinals.

Fields threw the pass where he expected Olave to be, but it was intercepted in the end zone, effectively ending the Buckeyes' season with a heartbreaking 29-23 defeat in the Fiesta Bowl.

Olave, now a junior, had to live with his mistake, which head coach Ryan Day did not blame him for, the entire offseason. Day described the pain Olave felt following Ohio State's lone loss in 2019, indicating he expected the standout receiver to use it as fuel.

"I love Chris Olave," Day said. "I'm not sure he ate solid food for about three or four days after that game. He was crushed. But that's not the reason why we lost the game. He threw his heart on the field, and he thought Justin was scrambling. When you play in games like that, things like that happen. Unfortunately, that happened."

"Chris is the ultimate competitor. Nobody cares more than Chris, and I know he's going to come back even more hungry. He's going to be a leader in that room."

In football, mistakes can be forgotten and forgiven when a player of Olave's caliber makes up for it on the next possession, or even in the next game. For Olave, his miscue happened on the last offensive play of the final game of the season for Ohio State.

The San Marcos, Calif., native carried the weight of his error into the offseason, but his opportunity to redeem himself nearly vanished with the COVID-19 pandemic shutting down spring ball and initially canceling the Big Ten season. When the season was reinstated, perhaps no one was more excited than Olave to get that metaphorical monkey off his back.

"I've been ready for a long time," Olave said Oct. 21 ahead of the matchup with Nebraska. "You think about that game and how the season ended and what could have happened. To finally be able to suit up and play a real game after practicing for these last three months, it is definitely a blessing."

"You think about so many things over the quarantine and what could have happened. I'm just ready to play along with my team. I can't wait to go out there Saturday and show the world."

Wasting no time reminding the world why he is one of the top receivers in college football, Olave snagged six receptions for 104 yards in Ohio State's 52-17 victory over Nebraska in the season opener.

A former three-star prospect, Olave has always been known for his incredible work ethic. He first made a name for himself on special teams, highlighted by a blocked punt against Michigan as a true freshman in 2018. Olave also hauled in two touchdowns in the Buckeyes' 62-39 victory over the Wolverines, quickly becoming a fan favorite.

In response to his gaffe at the Fiesta Bowl, Olave took his already-impressive dedication to another level. Having so much time off only made it more difficult for the talented wideout, but he came

back stronger and used his motivation to ignite his teammates.

"It was tough," Olave said Sept. 29. "I care so much about this team and this university. The first couple months were tough. I don't think I still have gotten over it. I was going through it for like 4-5 months especially during quarantine. With all that free time, when I found myself getting bored and I was going through it, I just went and worked out. I found myself working out 2-3 times a day, just trying to take my mind off things. I tried to play video games and hang around my brothers, hang around my family, but it was tough."

"When we got back, I just wanted to try to get better every day and try to spread that energy throughout the receiver room – try to be the best room in the nation. So I don't think I've gotten over it still. I've still got that chip on my shoulder, and I want to show the world."

The way Olave talks about his one slip-up makes it seem as if he did not have one of the best seasons by an Ohio State receiver in the program's illustrious history. As a sophomore, he corralled 49 catches for 849 yards and 12 touchdowns, which tied him for the fourth-most receiving scores in a single season by a Buckeye with Devin Smith and Parris Campbell.

How does a player who averaged 17.3 yards per reception and scored 12 touchdowns improve?

"I am just trying to be consistent," Olave said. "I'm trying to lead on and off the field. I worked by myself a lot and watched a lot of film. I just tried to get better on my own. I worked on my feet and on how to be a better route runner. I worked on my strength to take it to another level. I just want to be the best in the country at what I do."

When Olave was working out incessantly to make up for his mistake and prove just how great he is as a receiver, many pundits theorized that he would leave for the NFL if the Big Ten did not have a season. That could not be further from the truth, however, as wide receivers coach Brian Hartline explained that the junior wideout did not waver.

"Chris has always been on the side of being a Buckeye and graduating," said Hartline. "The talk of him leaving was nowhere inside this building, more so outside. His desire to be part of something special and get his degree was never more emphasized than after that last game in Arizona."

Olave confirmed what his position coach said, emphasizing the fact that he could not advance to the pros with his botched route as his final play in scarlet and gray.

"I would have come back. That's a guarantee," Olave said. "I couldn't leave that as the last play."

Part of what made Olave so eager to get back to action was having another year to develop his chemistry with Fields, who was a Heisman Trophy finalist in his first season after transferring from Georgia.

"He knows our body language, and sometimes when we miss a ball or something is off, we get together and he tries to show us what he wants," Olave said of Fields. "I try to show him what I want and where I want the ball at. It's little things like that to make it happen on game day."

"There is a lot of conversation, especially this week where we have a lot

of plays in. We got together, he and I. Whenever you miss the ball, he goes up to the receiver or the tight end or the running back and tries to fix things. Right after the play, I go up to him and tell him how I'm going to do this or that just so we can get on the same page."

Generally, he is rather soft-spoken, but Olave did not mince words when discussing his quarterback. He expects the chemistry between him and Fields to continue to blossom as the comfort grows.

"In this building, we feel he is the best player in the country," Olave said. "We know what he is capable of. When we're on the field together, he knows where everybody is going to be. When I run my routes, expect the ball to be there. He expects me to be there. We hold each other to higher standards."

"We just want to be the best in the country."

The dynamic tandem of Olave and Fields displayed their improved chemistry against the Huskers to open the season, with Olave exceeding 100 yards for the second time in his career. Beyond making personal progress and building his connection with Fields, Olave was challenged by Hartline to become a more prominent leader.

"There are a lot of challenges for him, just learning to become more of a leader and grow," Hartline said. "His growth has been phenomenal, really as a person. I love coaching him. We love having him in the room. And I'm really excited that he gets a chance to play this fall and is not waiting further down the road to do that."

While he is not the most vocal player, Olave shows his teammates how to stay focused on the grind to maximize their potential. In addition to his work ethic, Olave's perseverance helps make him a leader in the receivers room.

"I am just trying to go out there and try to bring that energy every day and just try to lead by example," Olave said. "I'm not really a big talker, but when I go out there and work hard and try to put my foot down and just keep going when things are going wrong and just trying to lead by example. That's how I lead."

Much excitement surrounded the arrival of the Buckeyes' loaded 2020 recruiting class, which featured five-star wideouts Julian Fleming and Jaxon Smith-Njigba and four-star receivers Mookie Cooper and Gee Scott. Along with sophomore slot receiver Garrett Wilson and sophomore speedster Jameson Williams, the highly touted pass catchers in Hartline's room need guidance, and Olave acts almost like another coach.

"His development as a person has been phenomenal," Hartline said of Olave. "I love coaching him and love having him in the room. We are always teaching guys at different levels. I know that, if my message isn't clear, guys like Chris can help put it in a language that I'm missing a beat on."

Before COVID-19 led to the cancellation of spring sport activities, Olave had already made quite the impression on his coaches and teammates with his demeanor in winter workouts. After just three spring practices, Hartline expressed how thrilled he was with his standout receiver's response to the bowl-game blunder.

"I'm not sure if anybody cares as much as him about himself, his brothers, his teammates, his peers. He's a great guy to coach, very blessed by it," Hartline said. "It

really hit him a different way. I think that it has a chance to have a ripple effect in his career and just recalibrate. Not make it any better. He already worked really hard, but just to enhance where he thought he was and then be that much better."

"I don't know if it's coming off the Fiesta Bowl or if it's just the next step in his progression. He's very motivated in wanting to be the best player in the country and goes from that perspective."

In January, Olave was rated the No. 10 wide receiver in the country by Pro Football Focus. Some might boast about such an achievement, but Olave is unlike most. He responded with a simple tweet, "Not good enough. Back to work."

The former San Marcos Mission Hills standout has made it clear he wants to be the best wide receiver in the nation. Olave, who still starts as a gunner in punt coverage, was named to the watch list for the Biletnikoff Award, which honors the outstanding receiver in college football.

What does Olave need to do to become the best of the best?

"I've got to just keep getting better every day and just try to help my team the best way I can," Olave said. "I feel like when I put the team first, the individual things will come. I try to go out there and work my hardest on special teams and try to contribute as a receiver. I feel like it's going to pay off when I put the team first."

Hungry to avenge his mishap and eager to exceed expectations, Olave calmly answered question after question about his fatal flaw from the Fiesta Bowl throughout a tumultuous offseason. Instead of dwelling on it, he focused on how he can help the Buckeyes return to the CFP and end the season with a national title.

"It didn't feel real in the moment or the day after," Olave said. "Especially for it to happen in front of millions of people that were watching, to end my season like that was tough. Everybody has their setbacks, everybody has their downs, and it's about how you react to it."

"I'm ready to help my team and ready to ball this year."

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# Hooker Trying To Make Name For Himself At OSU

By ANDREW LIND  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

After playing only sparingly during his first two years at Ohio State, safety Malik Hooker had a breakout redshirt sophomore season in 2016. He recorded seven interceptions, including a nation-high three that he returned for touchdowns, and was named a consensus All-American while leading the Buckeyes to a berth in the College Football Playoff.

Fast-forward four years and Hooker's younger brother, Marcus, has a chance to follow in those same footsteps – only he's determined to carve out his own legacy this season instead.

"I want to prove that I'm here and that my name will be a household name," Hooker told reporters during a teleconference on Oct. 14.

On the surface, there are plenty of similarities between the Hooker brothers. Both players came to Ohio State as unheralded three-star prospects from New Castle, Pa., choosing the Buckeyes over offers from programs such as Pittsburgh, Rutgers, Temple and West Virginia. But, in reality, that's where the comparisons end.

Malik, who is two inches taller and 14 pounds heavier than his younger brother, was known more for his skills on the basketball court than his football acumen. Ohio State took a chance on his athleticism, and he developed into a first-round pick of the Indianapolis Colts.

Marcus, meanwhile, was the more polished football player in high school, with other sports taking a back seat. He's a bit stockier, too, standing 5-11 and 200 pounds, and is much more likely to deliver a physical hit on his opponent than his brother ever was.

Malik also didn't play at all as a true freshman at Ohio State in 2014, whereas Marcus appeared in two games thanks to a rule change that season that now allows redshirt candidates to play in up to four games. It wasn't all positive, though, as

he was suspended for the 2018 season opener following a DUI arrest near his hometown and suffered a scaphoid fracture in his wrist that prematurely ended his season.

Marcus bounced back in 2019, though, and played in all 14 games on special teams and seven games on defense – none more important than the 56-27 win over Michigan when nickel cornerback Shaun Wade and fellow safety Josh Proctor were sidelined by injuries. He finished that game with a modest one tackle and one pass break up but gained valuable experience in the process.

Now Hooker and Proctor are battling for playing time at the one-high safety spot vacated by two-time team captain Jordan Fuller. As if growing up in his brother's shadow weren't enough, Fuller left some pretty big shoes to fill, as well.

"I thought as highly of Jordan as I've ever thought of any player," Ohio State safeties and special teams coach Matt Barnes said on Oct. 14. "He was obviously plenty athletic and made a ton of plays here, but (Hooker and Proctor) are probably at least as athletic if not more and certainly have the skills."

"Then again, we all know it's not always the fastest guy is the best player. It's not always the guy that jumps the highest or is the tallest or the heaviest that are the best players. It's the guy that's the best at playing the game, and a huge part of that is football IQ. And Jordan's football IQ is through the roof. I think Josh and Marcus are both very smart, very capable players. But there is no substitute for experience, so we've just got to keep finding ways to get these guys more and more (playing time) and just show them things to expect."

The Buckeyes will try to offset the lack of experience at the safety position by rotating Hooker and Proctor, playing up to their individual strengths.

"I think they've got a little bit different skill sets, which I think is a good thing," Barnes said. "I think situationally, one skill set vs. the other allows us to be a



COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

**TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW – Ohio State sophomore safety Marcus Hooker, the younger brother of former All-American Malik Hooker, hopes to have a breakout season of his own this fall.**

little bit more multiple where we need to be and play them at some different spots. They both played at a high level, and we are counting on those guys in a big way for us this season."

Barnes described Hooker as an instinctive and rangy center fielder with "freakish ball skills," while Proctor is more comfortable playing man-to-man defense and closer to the line of scrimmage.

"Josh is a great ballplayer – a tremendous ballplayer, as a matter of fact," Hooker said. "He has a great way of making his way to the ball. He's fast as he comes down, and his size plays a huge role in being a safety. Josh has many things that I can't do, and I have many things that he can't do. We all have our own ways of working. He handles his. I handle mine."

"We all have different mindsets playing safety, and I feel like mine is just getting the ball. We want to have huge turnovers and things like that. I know I can tackle and do things of that nature, but I'm trying to be more focused on trying to get the ball any way that I can and put our team in a better position to score on offense."

It should go without saying that Hooker's description of his own game sounds quite a bit like his older brother. So rather than avoid the comparisons, maybe he'll finally embrace them and lead the Buckeyes to a national title this year – something Malik was unable to do in his lone year as the starter.

"I am starting to get more of a glimpse of what I can become," Hooker said.

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# Healthy Munford Looks To Dominate This Season

By ANDREW LIND  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Though he started 13 games last season, Ohio State left tackle Thayer Munford wasn't himself. He was dealing with a lingering back injury that forced him to miss the Rose Bowl following the previous season and all of spring practice, but he pushed through to anchor an offensive line that was breaking in four new starters in 2019.

That lack of offseason conditioning and practice time eventually caught up to Munford, who had to come off the bench with an ankle injury in the win at Northwestern. He admitted he cringes every time he watches film of himself in preparation for this season.

"My injuries were kind of nagging me throughout the whole season, and everybody saw it last year," Munford told reporters during a teleconference on Oct. 21. "Toward the end of the season, it was slowly getting better, but it wasn't where I wanted to be and it wasn't where my teammates wanted me to be. Everybody knew that I wasn't at my best last year at all.

"There aren't words for it at all. After watching all of last year's games, I knew I wasn't 100 percent. I knew I wasn't powerful with my run game. I knew I wasn't as fluid as I am right now with my pass sets. That motivated me so much. I just want to go out there and compete and dominate whoever is in front of me right now. I'm going to have fun doing it, we're all going to have fun doing it."

The 6-6, 315-pound Munford earned second-team all-Big Ten honors in 2019 but rededicated himself to the weight room this offseason – at least as much as the pandemic has allowed – to strengthen his core, which played a role in the initial injury he suffered. He's also improved his diet in an effort to limit potential ailments moving forward.

"To be honest, I felt like I was about 80 or 70 percent (last year)," Munford said. "This year, I'm going to be showing a lot more. I'm going to be a lot more powerful. I'm going to be finishing my blocks and sustaining a lot more. I was too cautious last year because I was thinking about my injuries.

"I just can't wait. I'm so anxious to actually play. It's not going to be perfect all the time, but you're going to see a different Thayer."

A former four-star prospect from Cincinnati who played his final year of his high school football at Massillon (Ohio) Washington, Munford is often overshadowed by his teammates along the offensive line, including All-America right guard Wyatt Davis and center Josh Myers, a Rimington Award candidate. Ohio State will also have two new starters this fall in left guard Harry Miller and right tackle Nicholas Petit-Frere, who are both former five-star prospects, but Munford's health will be key to whether the Buckeyes' offensive attack is able to realize its full potential.



COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE DEPT. OF ATHLETICS

**FEELING GOOD – Senior left tackle Thayer Munford (75) is back to full strength and ready to protect quarterback Justin Fields' blind side this season after dealing with separate back and ankle injuries last fall.**

"He's in the best shape of his life," Ohio State offensive line coach Greg Studrawa said on Oct. 20. "His weight is right where it should be. He seems quicker than he was last year, and his strength levels are back up. He's got some more drive and leg power coming off the football.

"I noticed the other day during the scrimmage he was driving guys down the field, and I didn't see that a lot from him last year. It was spotty. It wasn't consistent. So (it has been) making him consistent and the fact that in his mind he has nothing holding him back now. He's not worried about what's going to happen with his back or anything like that and he's passed those tests, and so he's ready to let it loose. It's really exciting because he really feels good mentally. He's really in a good place."

Ohio State's offensive line might be one of the nation's best this season, even with the departure of third-round draft pick Jonah Jackson, who was named first-team All-Big Ten by the coaches in his only year with the Buckeyes after transferring from Rutgers, as well as second-team all-conference right tackle Branden Bowen. Studrawa cites the leadership shown by Davis, Munford and Myers.

"I was so proud of the guys last year because

that was one of the best lines in the country and how they played last year," Studrawa said. "I told them the other day, I said, 'I think you guys can be better.' That's our goal. Our goal is to take what we did last year and be better.

"The potential for this group to be a great offensive line is right there. Now they've got to go out and they've got to do it. You take it game by game, you go out there and you give everything you can for that game and let's move on to the next one, one game at a time. So far, that's what they're doing."

The Buckeyes reached the College Football

Playoff thanks, in large part, to the offensive line opening holes for former running back J.K. Dobbins to rush for a single-season school-record 2,003 yards last fall. But their biggest weakness was undoubtedly in pass blocking, allowing 35 sacks, which ranked tied for 108th in the country.

A healthy Munford should relieve some of the back-side pressure on quarterback Justin Fields.

"You're going to see a different offensive line," Munford said. "We are a force to be reckoned with right now."

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Oct. 31, 2020 BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN • 17



# Petit-Frere Earns Chance To Fulfill His Potential

By WYATT CROSER  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

After committing to Ohio State as a five-star prospect and becoming the seventh-highest rated recruit to commit to the Buckeyes in the modern recruiting era, there were some lofty expectations for offensive tackle Nicholas Petit-Frere.

Two seasons in, and, while finding playing time in four games during the 2018 season and every game in 2019, the redshirt sophomore had not yet fulfilled what many felt was promised from him as the top tackle and No. 7 overall recruit in the 2018 class.

But offensive line coach Greg Studrawa did not share that opinion, saying in a Zoom call with the media on Oct. 20 that he has been more than impressed with how Petit-Frere has developed, both this offseason and through his two full seasons with the program.

"He's right on track of where I thought he would be, where we thought he would be," Studrawa said. "He's done a great job during this pandemic. There are a few guys, but he's one of them that has really changed his body. He is stronger, he is bigger. He's 315 pounds now. He's as strong as he ever was, and his offseason, his development, has really pushed him to the top of that position. He's just done a great job."

That push to the top of the position led to Petit-Frere being named the starter at right tackle, joining Wyatt Davis, Harry Miller, Thayer Munford and Josh Myers as the first-string members of the offensive line for Ohio State in week one. Head coach Ryan Day made the announce-

ment on Oct. 20, while also stating that freshman Paris Johnson and sophomore Dawand Jones would find time as backups for Petit-Frere.

"All three of them are going to play one way or another," Day said. "I think right now, Nick is going to be the starter at right tackle. He's done a really good job. He's worked really hard in the offseason, and so we'll kind of see as the season goes on and where it goes, but I'm very impressed with what he's done, putting on weight, changing his body, and then the way he's practiced over the last couple weeks."

As both Day and Studrawa mentioned, size was a key part of Petit-Frere's development, with the Tampa (Fla.) Berkeley Prep product being listed at 272 pounds on his 247Sports recruiting page. In a pre-season depth chart this year, he was listed at 305, while his offensive line coach marks him at 315.

Going into that weight gain was a food regimen that lasted through the quarantine and was helped by the assistance of his mother, Loris, according to Studrawa.

"The funny thing about it is all the calories, he went home and lived with mom an extended period of time and she put her foot down and took the thing over, to be quite honest with you, and fed him every day and got him up to where he was supposed to be," Studrawa said. "She called me and asked me, 'Coach, you're going to have to send some groceries because I can't make enough pasta.' So I know he was eating a ton of pasta. She was making spaghetti and some lasagna and his favorite meals, and he ate her out of house and home."

"She was so fired up when it was over to get him back here because she couldn't

afford it anymore."

Munford, the lone senior starter on the offensive line, has noticed a lot of Petit-Frere's growth, both in development and in actual size. He said his expectations for the third-year sophomore are through the roof because of what he has seen from him in workouts and in practices as he continues to grow as a lineman.

"Nick Petit-Frere has been tremendous this year," Munford said on Oct. 21 in a call with the media. "Like last year, he was getting a couple reps and stuff of course, especially during the Northwestern game for me. And that Northwestern game for me, it showed me and all the other offensive linemen, 'All right, he will be ready to play.' He's not a slacker. He wants to work. That's what Buckeye Nation is going to see out of Nick Petit. He's going to work and he's going to protect (quarterback) Justin (Fields) as well as anybody. I've got a feeling that, after he gets done here, he will be one of the best tackles in his class."

"He looks a lot bigger than 295. This year he has been really focused on bringing his weight up and also making sure he does the right technique that Coach Stud wants us to do as well. With him adding that weight on, it makes him a lot stronger in the run game and a lot more powerful in the pass game as well."

While Petit-Frere has won the job to start the season, it is not locked up for him throughout the rest of the season. As Day stated, Johnson and Jones are prepared to compete for a starting job and will continue to find time, with the answer of whether that will be in crucial moments or in garbage time yet to be answered.

The job may be Petit-Frere's to lose

after week one, but Studrawa feels specifically confident about the amount of depth he has across the entire offensive line this season, during a year in which he said it would be especially important to have that depth because of the potential of positive COVID-19 cases costing Ohio State a player for 21 days.

"We've approached it differently with this COVID thing," Studrawa said. "When you get your starters in there, I have to get those guys in the groove of the game and get them going and all those things and play those guys so they can develop a cohesiveness, but now, with this COVID, at any minute you may lose a guy. This guy may be gone the day before the game, the night before the game, two days before the game, whatever it may be, so the development of those second guys has been more critical this year. I'm not as nervous as I usually am about backups going into the first game because even the backups have played. Those guys have played in games, and they're bigger, they're stronger, their attention to detail has been tremendous."

Still, Petit-Frere is in the driver's seat at right tackle for the foreseeable future as Johnson gains in-game experience as a true freshman and Jones continues to practice at both tackle and guard.

All the way back in April of 2019, Petit-Frere was finishing up his first full academic year at Ohio State, but he still understood what the expectations were for him as a player, not only after becoming the highest-rated offensive line commit in program history, but for what he knows he can achieve on a personal level.

"It's my expectations," Petit-Frere said. "It's not really like expectations of like, 'Oh, he was rated a five-star guy.' Those are my expectations, because it's like a self-determination for me to get better."

In his third season with the program, Petit-Frere is on track to make those expectations, both for himself and from the outside, come true, as he is now in his spot as a starter on an offensive line that is returning three players from a group that was a finalist for the best offensive line in the country.

What Petit-Frere did this offseason amid a pandemic has helped to build him into that starting-caliber player, gaining weight through pasta made by his mother while continuing to improve as a player.

But even before that development in the summer and in training camp, Studrawa saw something in the highly regarded prospect all the way back in April.

"This is Nick's time," Studrawa said on April 22. "He's finally got his weight up where it needs to be, and he's got his strength up where it needs to be. And he's finally learned inside and out what we're doing on offense. So I really think it's his time to shine."

Day agreed with Studrawa's sentiments.

"I would say that I'm very impressed with the way Nick had an unbelievable offseason," Day said. "He's had a really good pre-season, and I think he's going to have a heck of a year."

With the head coach, offensive line coach and many Ohio State fans expecting big things out of Petit-Frere, it is now up to him to prove himself worthy as he officially steps into a starting role for the first time with the Buckeyes in 2020.



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# Heuerman's Impact Went Beyond Stats For OSU

By WYATT CROSHER  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

*BSB is continuing an eight-part series where, in each issue, the staff writers will come to a consensus on one player or a group of starting players who are deserving of being named the best at that position for Ohio State from 2010-19. Part three is on the best tight end of the 2010s.*

Ohio State had success in nearly every season throughout the 2010s, and there were stars to be found at nearly every position. The tight end might be the lone exception, with multiple players playing their roles exceptionally well, but never to the point of becoming an NFL draft pick in the first or even the second round.

However, there were plenty of difference-makers at the position, and there was still a consensus pick as to who was the best tight end in the last decade.

## The Nominees

Starting off the decade in the tight end position was Jake Stoneburner, who played one season in the 2000s, earning two catches for 30 yards in 2009, before grabbing 51 catches for 684 yards and 13 scores in the 2010-12 seasons.

Jeff Heuerman shared two seasons with Stoneburner but took over as the primary tight end until 2014, helping Ohio State win a national championship in his senior season before getting selected in the third round, No. 92 overall by the Denver Broncos in the 2015 NFL draft.

Also a part of that championship team was Nick Vannett, who never dominated the stat sheet in his time with the Buckeyes (55 receptions, 585 yards, six touchdowns over four seasons) but was a key factor on every team he was on and also became a third-round pick in the 2016 NFL draft.

Marcus Baugh became a key part of the receiving game in his final two seasons with Ohio State, hurdling his way to 52 catches for 573 yards and seven touchdowns in the 2016-17 seasons.

Rounding out the decade is Luke Farrell, who has not been a major receiving factor for Ohio State through his first three seasons with 29 catches for 343 yards and three scores, but he has been a key starter and blocker who has helped the offense thrive without filling up the stat sheet.

## The Discussion

When asked who they believe was the best tight end over the 2010s, here is what the BSB staff had to say:

**Wyatt Crosher:** "The tight end might be the hardest one of these to decide, as it has been a position that has lacked a superstar at Ohio State throughout the past 10 years. But I still think Heuerman is the pretty clear choice for how much he brought to the Buckeyes.

"Heuerman was a do-it-all type of tight end and matched his receiving ability with excellent blocking that helped lead the way to a national championship for the 2014 team. His teammate Vannett is high on that list as well, as are Stoneburner and Farrell, who still has another season to bolster his legacy, but Heuerman exemplified the whole package better than any tight end in the 2010s."

**Joe Dempsey:** "Statistics never show the whole picture, and that sentiment is particularly relevant to the Ohio State tight ends room. The Buckeyes have enjoyed excellent

production from the tight end position across the past decade, though the typical receiving stats may suggest otherwise.

"Heuerman epitomizes high-quality play without gaudy numbers. The 2014 national champion Buckeyes would not have been the same team without Heuerman, who brought great leadership and exceptional blocking on the edge to the team, making him the best tight end of the decade.

"Beyond Heuerman, Ohio State has had numerous tight ends who may not have put up eye-catching stats but impacted winning. Baugh, Rashod Berry, Farrell, Jeremy Ruckert, Stoneburner and Vannett all deserve credit for their contributions. Berry, Heuerman and Ruckert may be the most well-rounded of the group, but Stoneburner's 13 touchdowns gave him five more touchdowns than any other Buckeye tight end throughout the decade."

**Andrew Lind:** "While he almost recorded the same number of catches for the same amount of yards as Stoneburner, albeit with six fewer touchdowns, Heuerman gets my vote because he was one of the leaders on Ohio State's 2014-15 national championship run.

"His 52 catches for 792 yards (15.2 yards per reception) rank second among tight ends in program history in average per catch behind John Lumpkin (1996-98), while he also excelled as a blocker – a critical role for any tight end in the Buckeyes' offensive attack."

**Patrick Mayhorn:** "Ohio State hasn't exactly made its living offensively in recent years by throwing to the tight end. Since 2010, Ohio State's high-water mark for receptions in a single season by a tight end belongs to Baugh, who hauled in 28 passes for 304 yards in 2017, a far cry from tight end-heavy schools like Wisconsin or Iowa.

"Because of that, we have to derive value or quality when judging Ohio State tight ends from measures outside of the statistical ones, because receptions and yards often say very little about the impact that a tight end had at Ohio State. When looking at it through that lens, I think it's pretty obvious that Heuerman has to be the pick.

"He didn't put up huge numbers in Columbus, but he was a massive piece of Ohio State's 2014 national title group, specifically as a blocker and as a leader. Other players such as Baugh, Stoneburner and Vannett come pretty close, but I think Heuerman wins this one."

## The Choice

Even without a true superstar at tight end in the 2010s, the BSB staff all agreed that Heuerman was the one who stood out among the rest. And that wouldn't have been expected from Heuerman's recruitment, when he was a three-star tight end at Naples (Fla.) Baron Collier who was ranked the No. 20 tight end and No. 413 prospect in the country.

Tim Hinton, current executive director for football relations at Ohio State and former tight end coach for the Buckeyes from 2012-15, told Buckeye Sports Bulletin that Heuerman had some quirks that dropped his recruiting ranking, but he still did not let his head coach forget about not pursuing him.

"You watch his running form, he's a little, I don't want to say the world gangly, but there's some kids you just watch and you're like 'Well, that's a pure runner.' Jeff never really kind of had that," Hinton told BSB. "He's always given

Coach (Urban) Meyer a little bit of a hard time that when he was in Florida, he didn't recruit him, and then he comes to Ohio State and becomes a really good player for him and helps him win a national championship."

Heuerman had just one catch in his freshman season, but it came in a crucial game. Despite a down 2011, Ohio State made it into the Gator Bowl against Florida with a 6-6 record, and in the second quarter, Heuerman caught a 25-yard pass from quarterback Braxton Miller to help lead to a touchdown to tie the game at 7-7.

Hinton said Heuerman immediately proved to be a key player for the team and impressed in the weight room before the field with impressive numbers on the bench press and vertical jump.

"I never really had an expectation, but it became clear soon that he was an outstanding football player and certainly had a chance to be really, really special as a college player," Hinton said. "You knew you had a very smart, intelligent, tough kid that had a little bit of savvy to him, and the more I got to know him, the more that all stuck.

"He was an amazing athlete. He was, I think, the second-highest bench press reps on 225, and I think he had the second-highest vertical jump on the team, and that was at 6-5, 255 pounds."

During an undefeated 12-0 season in his first year with Meyer, Heuerman expanded his role in the offense with eight catches for 94 yards and a score. But it was the 2013 season, Heuerman's junior year, when he broke out.

Heuerman had 26 catches for 466 yards and four touchdowns that year, including a five-catch, 116-yard outing against Purdue and a 57-yard touchdown against Clemson in the Orange Bowl. Much of that success, Hinton said, came from his connection with Miller, who was more concerned with finding a target than going through his progressions.

"When Braxton Miller was the quarterback, he really got a lot more touches because Braxton would always say, 'I'm going to throw to the open guy,' where some guys

are very particular about progression, where the ball goes based on progression and blah blah blah," Hinton said. "Braxton was a little bit opposite because he had a good feel for where guys were and he just said 'Listen, that guy was open,' he wasn't primary, second or third sometimes, but the ball got to him."

Heuerman's numbers dropped in his final season with J.T. Barrett and Cardale Jones under center, catching just 17 passes for 207 yards and two touchdowns. But his blocking ability and his leadership were pivotal pieces of the Ohio State offense, and despite a brutal ankle injury in the College Football Playoff semifinal against Alabama, he played a big part once he returned in the national championship against Oregon.

"The first play of the game against Alabama, Jeff actually hurts his ankle, and it's one of the worst ankles I've ever seen after postgame, black and blue and swollen," Hinton said. "Jeff didn't practice a lot the first week preparing for the national championship game, the second week he did, and then obviously he started.

"I don't know how many times you saw us run a counter play in that game and do some other things, but those tight ends made the key blocks on a nose guard for Zeke Elliott's 33-yard touchdown and we ran a lot of counters in that game, which means the tight end was the puller and he had to do an outstanding job of blocking, so very integral in winning a national championship in my opinion."

Heuerman was picked by the Broncos in the 2015 NFL draft. His success with the program went past his stats, and Hinton said what Heuerman gave the team off the field was a crucial piece in the last Ohio State team to win the title.

"I think his demeanor, leadership, I think his communication with Coach Meyer was really special," Hinton said. "He was a guy that he could walk in and knock on Coach Meyer's door and he could walk in that door and say, 'Coach, this is where I think the team is mood-wise and this is where we are fatigue-wise,' and Coach Meyer respected his opinion. I think that part of it was what made him a very, very special leadership part of our football team in that 2014 season."



Jeff Heuerman

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# Penn State Bout Looms Large For Ohio State

By PATRICK MAYHORN  
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

The winner of the Big Ten East division could very well be decided on Oct. 31, in just the second weekend of action in the conference this fall. Even after Penn State fell in its first game of the season, an overtime stunner against Indiana, the Nittany Lions are still very much in title contention if they can keep the blemish against Indiana as their lone mark in the loss column.

Without an obvious contender in the East outside of the projected top two of Ohio State and Penn State – and perhaps the dark horse Michigan Wolverines, who stomped Minnesota 49-24 – the battle between the two in Happy Valley seems to be a potential play-in of sorts for the Big Ten championship. With rail-thin margins in a shortened season, an undefeated campaign may be a requirement for any Big Ten member hoping to hear its name called for the final four grouping.

This matchup also appears to be Ohio State's most taxing through that eight-game schedule, at least if the preseason ESPN Football Power Index is to be believed.

"According to ESPN's Football Power Index, Penn State – the last team not named Ohio State to win the league – has the best chance to beat the Buckeyes this season (28 percent)," wrote Heather Dinich of ESPN prior to the Big Ten's official return to play. The loss to Indiana could complicate that math, but this is still a program that's won 11 games each season in three of its last four years.

All of that plays to make this as high-pressure a game as it has seemingly been every year since James Franklin's arrival at Penn State, even without the traditional white-out crowd that greets Ohio State for prime-time matchups every other year. Ohio State is 2-1 on the road against Franklin's Nittany Lions and 5-1 overall against the seventh-year head coach, but those wins almost always come in tight fashion for the Buckeyes.

In the last six games between the two – Franklin arrived in 2014 – the average margin is just 8.5 points. In the last four, as Penn State has returned to the upper echelon of the conference, just four points have separated the teams on average, including back-to-back one-point wins for the Buckeyes in 2017 and 2018.

Entering the 2020 edition, oddsmakers and advanced statistics aren't quite as sold on Penn State's ability to take the Buckeyes to the final whistle, but the expectation is still a competitive game at the worst, and a serious battle at the best. Prior to the start of the season, Bill Connelly's SP+ analytics system marked the Buckeyes as a 5.3-point favorite over the Nittany Lions, while Las Vegas oddsmakers gave OSU an 10.5-point edge on early betting lines.

The slant in favor of Ohio State seems to be a result of both excitement around Ryan Day's program, with a number of key contributors returning, along with several question marks surrounding Penn State's roster, which brings back a large portion of its offense but is replacing

stars in wide receiver K.J. Hamler, now in the NFL, linebacker Micah Parsons, who opted out of the 2020 season, and half-back Journey Brown, who is expected to miss the year because of an undisclosed medical issue.

On top of that, Penn State has a number of newcomers both in the staff and in the starting lineup, most notably in offensive coordinator Kirk Ciarrocca.

Ciarrocca came to Penn State via Minnesota, where he coordinated the No. 21 offense in the nation in points per game (34.1) in 2019. Now in charge of calling the plays and coaching up returning quarterback Sean Clifford, Ciarrocca could be the X-factor for an offense that struggled to consistently move the ball in the air last season, as Clifford completed just 59.2 percent of his passes for 2,654 yards and 23 touchdowns.

While the staggered offseason made developing that relationship a bit more difficult, Ciarrocca told reporters during fall camp that he thinks Clifford has improved significantly entering his second season as a starter.

"I think probably the biggest growth that he's made – because we've spent so much time meeting and talking about this process – is his pre-snap thinking that we want to do and applying it to the plays," Ciarrocca said. "I think he's really been able to see – since we've started to go again – really how it all works and why it is that we want to think a certain way about these certain plays."

The players on the receiving end of Clifford's passes may prove even more important than Clifford himself. With Hamler gone, Penn State is expecting major contributions from star tight end Pat Freiermuth and returning starting wide receiver Jahan Dotson but will need a third consistent target. According to Roar Lions Roar senior editor Matt de Bear, that guy could be freshman slot receiver Parker Washington, named a starter in Penn State's opening depth chart.

"Jahan Dotson was expected to move back inside in the slot after K.J. Hamler left for the NFL, but Washington has been impressive enough over summer and fall camp to solidify himself and allow Dotson to remain outside," de Bear told BSB. "I think just getting a second receiver. Dotson is a known quantity and obviously Pat Freiermuth at tight end is a known quantity catching passes."

"Getting that second receiver and kind of that third option that Penn State can rely on is really what was missing more than anything in the passing game last year, that third option behind Hamler and Freiermuth, and if Washington can step up and be that guy, I think that's going to allow the running game to really flourish, because you'll have to respect that passing game more than teams really did for a big chunk of last year."

In the running game, Penn State will look to Noah Cain and Devyn Ford to fill in for Brown, both of whom contributed last season.

"You've got two guys in Noah Cain and Devyn Ford, both former four-star true sophomores that Penn State has total confidence in," de Bear said. "Cain specifically is a guy that was probably the No. 1

## Get To Know ... Penn State

### About Penn State

- **2020 record:** 0-1.
- **Team Information:** Offensive Formation – Spread; Defensive Formation – 4-3; Starters Returning – Offense 8, Defense 4, Specialists 1.
- **Head Coach:** James Franklin, 10th year, 80-39, seventh at Penn State, 56-24.
- **Series History:** 35th meeting; Ohio State leads 20-14-0
- **School Facts:** Location – University Park, Pa.; Enrollment – 46,270; Nickname – Nittany Lions; Color – Blue; Conference – Big Ten (East Division); Stadium – Beaver Stadium (Surface, Grass; Capacity – 106,572).

### Top Offensive Returners

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Sean Clifford	17	119	7.0	1
Devyn Ford	20	69	3.5	1
Keyone Lee	6	35	5.8	0

Passing	Comp.-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Sean Clifford	24-35	68.6	238	3-2

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
Jahan Dotson	4	94	23.5	1
Pat Freiermuth	7	60	8.6	1
Daniel George	3	29	9.7	0

### Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game	– 35.0
Rushing Yards Per Game	– 250.0
Passing Yards Per Game	– 238.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game	– 488.0

### 2020 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Oct. 24	at Indiana	L, 36-35 (OT)
Oct. 31	OHIO STATE	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 7	MARYLAND	TBA
Nov. 14	at Nebraska	TBA
Nov. 21	IOWA	TBA
Nov. 28	at Michigan	TBA
Dec. 5	at Rutgers	TBA
Dec. 12	MICHIGAN STATE	TBA
Dec. 19	Big Ten Championship Week	TBA

### Top Defensive Returners

Def. Leaders	Solo-Ast.	Tot.	TFL-Yds.	Sacks
Shaka Toney	7-0	7	2.0-11	2.0-11
Tariq Castro-Fields	4-1	5	0.0	0.0
Joey Porter	5-0	5	1.0-8	1.0-8
Ellis Brooks	5-0	5	1.0-4	0.0
Jaquan Brisker	2-1	3	1.0-1	0.0
Jesse Luketa	2-1	3	0.0	0.0
Lamont Wade	1-2	3	0.0	0.0
Jayson Oweh	2-0	2	0.0	0.0
Antonio Shelton	2-0	2	1.0-5	0.0
P.J. Mustipher	1-1	2	0.0	0.0

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Lamont Wade	1	0	0.0	0	0

### Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed	– 36.0
Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed	– 41.0
Passing Yards Per Game Allowed	– 170.0
Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed	– 211.0

running back for the first half of last year before suffering an injury that opened the door for Journey Brown to become the guy, and he took it and ran with it.

"It's funny to say that you can replace a guy like Journey Brown, but running back is the one spot where I think the way Penn State has recruited (is to a level where it can)."

Behind an offensive line that many, de Bear included, expects to be Franklin's best yet at Penn State, improvement is an attainable goal for the Penn State offense.

Defensively, there is plenty returning from 2019 but also a significant amount of star power departed.

Parsons is the big name, but defensive end Yetur Gross-Matos led the team in sacks in 2019 and has since left for the NFL. However, depth and talent up front should allow for Penn State to continue to thrive in the trenches with third-year former four-star Jayson Oweh and longtime contributor P.J. Mustipher stepping into starting roles, alongside entrenched starters Antonio Shelton and Shaka Toney.

"They're certainly pretty deep on the defensive line," de Bear said. "Shaka Toney is a fifth-year senior, actually put on about 15-20 pounds, which has me really excited to see what he's able to do as an all-purpose defensive end. He's gotten better every year, evolved into that every-down defensive end. I think they're deep at tackle too, as far as having four or five guys they're comfortable with. Antonio Shelton is a guy that just comes and works hard, isn't going to be doing anything flashy necessarily, but they missed him against Minnesota last year (he was suspended for the game)."

"P.J. Mustipher is another one that I'm really excited to see this season – third year in the program, he has a ton of potential, and I think he's ready to go. Jayson Oweh is that freak defensive end that people are already talking about as a first-round draft pick even though he hasn't really played a lot. He redshirted his first year, was more of a situational

guy last year."

The secondary is in a similar place, returning Tariq Castro-Fields at cornerback along with Lamont Wade and Jaquan Brisker at safety, while plugging in new starter Joey Porter opposite Castro-Fields.

However, in the wake of Parsons' departure, Penn State has more questions than answers in its linebacker room. Middle linebacker Ellis Brooks and outside linebacker Jesse Luketa have been contributors on the defense for several years now and serve as relatively known commodities. The player to watch as a potential replacement for Parsons is former five-star Brandon Smith, who has drawn praise from defensive coordinator Brent Pry.

"Oh, he's a big part of the plan right now," Pry said when asked about Smith. "There's not a lot of guys walking around at 6-4, 245, 250 and (can) run like he does. He's got tremendous length. He's very physical. He runs very well. He's raw but he's eager. He's learning every day. He's become very coachable. We're super-excited about him. He's a guy whose role is obviously going to increase tenfold."

For Penn State, answering some of those big questions at quarterback, wide receiver and in the linebackers room could be the difference between Big Ten title contention and another season spent as the runner-up in the East division. While those answers won't likely be known until the final whistle blows after Ohio State and Penn State square off, Franklin told reporters that he's confident in his team, though he appreciates the challenge ahead of them in a strong league.

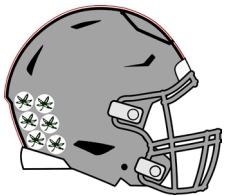
"There haven't been those days where you feel like you've got to pull it out of them to practice the way you need to practice," Franklin said. "Guys are flying around, having fun. There's a real sense of appreciation of being out there."

"I do think we're a talented team. But I also know there are some really talented teams in this league."



James Franklin





# Ohio State at Penn State

Saturday, Oct. 31, 2020 • 7:30 p.m. • ABC  
Beaver Stadium; University Park, PA



## Projected Depth Charts

### How We See It

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

Woody Hayes is credited with saying the biggest improvement is made between the first and second games. Now, there likely have been numerous coaches who have offered that advice, but this is about Ohio State football, so we'll stick with him. No matter, with the season being reduced because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's imperative that game two be exponentially better than what the Buckeyes showed in the 52-17 season-opening win vs. Nebraska on Oct. 24 in Ohio Stadium. That is so true for the running game that sorely misses J.K. Dobbins.

To their credit and that of the offensive line, Trey Sermon and Master Teague flashed occasionally as the game progressed, but the inability to gain on short-yardage situations is troubling. Too often it was quarterback Justin Fields to the rescue, reminiscent of the days of Braxton Miller or J.T. Barrett. Fields was second to Sermon for Buckeyes in yards (54) and led in carries (15), which is nothing to be proud of if you are expected to control the line of scrimmage. PSU, which was ranked eighth when it lost 36-35 in overtime at Indiana on Oct. 24, must make do without former Ohio State recruit Micah Parsons after the standout linebacker opted to prepare for the NFL draft. The Penn State defense allowed only 133 total yards (99 pass, 34 rush) until faltering on Indiana's last scoring drive of regulation and the series in OT. **EDGE: EVEN**

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

The Nittany Lions have been reaching deep into their running-back pool only one game into the season. Don't stop believing they will miss the workload from Journey Brown, who could miss the season because of a medical condition discovered in the offseason. He started 10 games in 2019 with a team-high 890 yards and 12 touchdowns on 129 carries. The spotlight moved to Noah Cain, but he had only three carries before being injured against the Hoosiers and Devyn Ford took over and finished with 69 yards on 20 carries. The key for the Buckeyes is to contain quarterback Sean Clifford, who didn't appear to be a threat last season (five rushing TDs on a 3.5-yard average) but scampered for a 35-yard score vs. Indiana and led PSU with 119 yards on 17 carries. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

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

The only thing more spectacular than Fields' 20-of-21 passing for 276 yards and two touchdowns against Nebraska was the toe-tapping grab by true freshman Jaxon Smith-Njigba on the second TD pass. It was a welcome sight for Buckeye fans because Fields seemed fixated on returnees Garrett Wilson (seven catches for 129 yards, one TD) and Chris Olave (six for 104 yards) for much of the game. That was only natural with a group of talented rookies in their first game. Penn State will try to exploit Ohio State's O-line that allowed three sacks and left Fields under pressure on numerous occasions. PSU will concentrate on containing Olave and Wilson so might the tight ends be more of a factor? **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

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

Ohio State's secondary wasn't challenged much by Nebraska's Adrian Martinez but should find more of a threat from Clifford, although he continued his uneven career in the Indiana game. He threw two picks but had three touchdown passes, including stepping up in the pocket and threading a 60-yard pass to Jahan Dotson with 2:30 to play to put PSU up 21-20. Clifford was 24 of 25 for 238 yards. Last season he completed 59.3 percent of his passes for 2,654 yards and 23 TDs against seven interceptions. The Buckeyes got three sacks against Nebraska's mobile quarterbacks, but PSU yielded just one sack of Clifford. **EDGE: EVEN**

#### SPECIAL TEAMS

Wilson had a 22-yard punt return that offset a muffed kickoff. OSU punter Drue Chrisman was spot-on with a 49.0 average on two punts, one inside the 20, and Blake Haubeil nailed a 34-yard field goal. Penn State's usually sure Jake Pinegar made 11 of 12 last season but had misses of 25 and 47 yards vs. the Hoosiers. Long kicker Jordan Stout was a yard short of making a 57-yarder with three seconds left in the fourth quarter. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

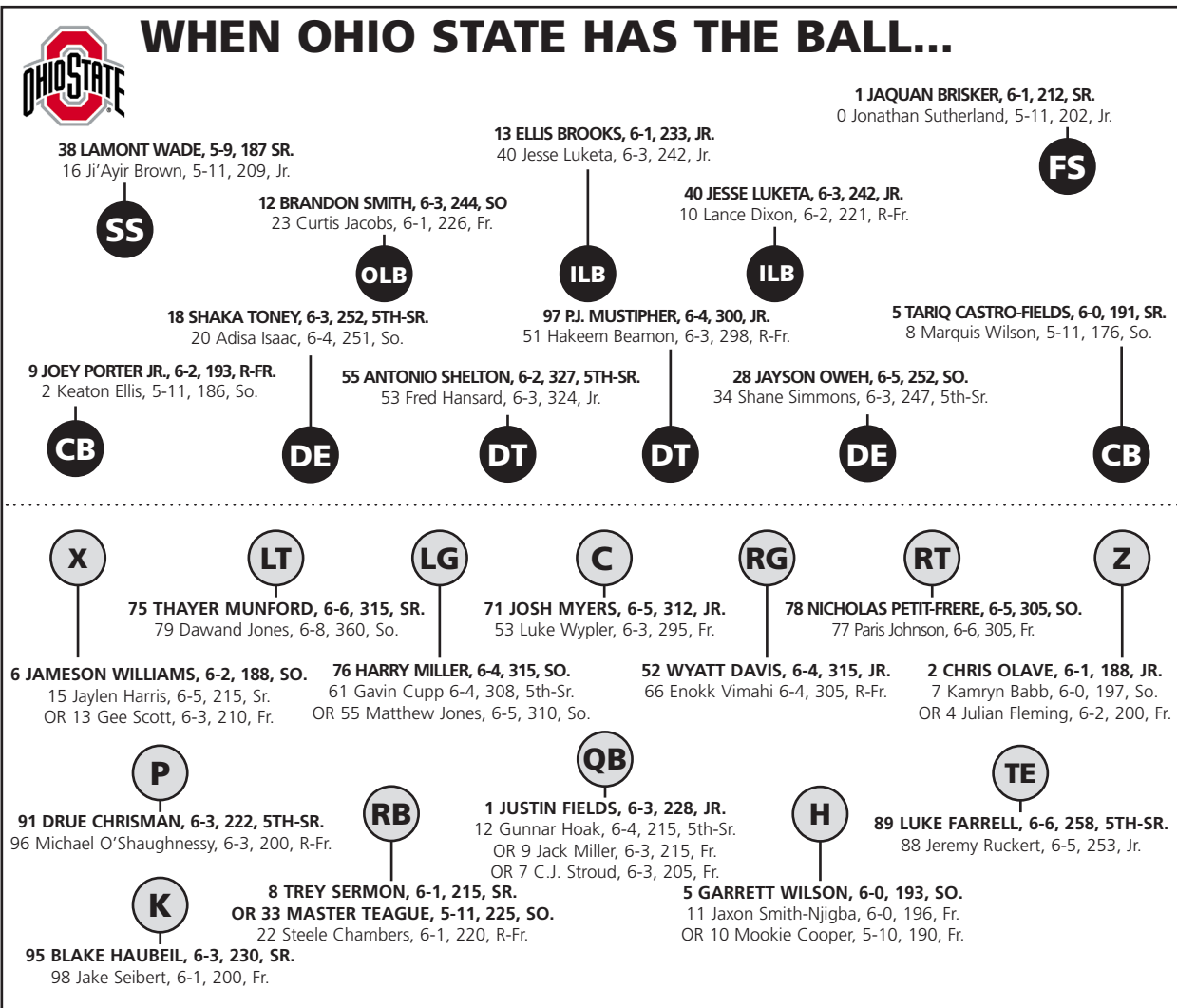
#### INTANGIBLES

Penn State will be sour all week after blowing the game against Indiana. The thought of going 0-2 has everyone in Happy Valley nervous. Those Buckeye fans giddy that there won't be a 108,000-plus whiteout at Beaver Stadium have to remember that Ohio Stadium will be just as vacant when Michigan visits Dec. 12 so it evens out. Truth be told, Ohio State has thrived on the hostile environment there. **EDGE: PENN STATE**

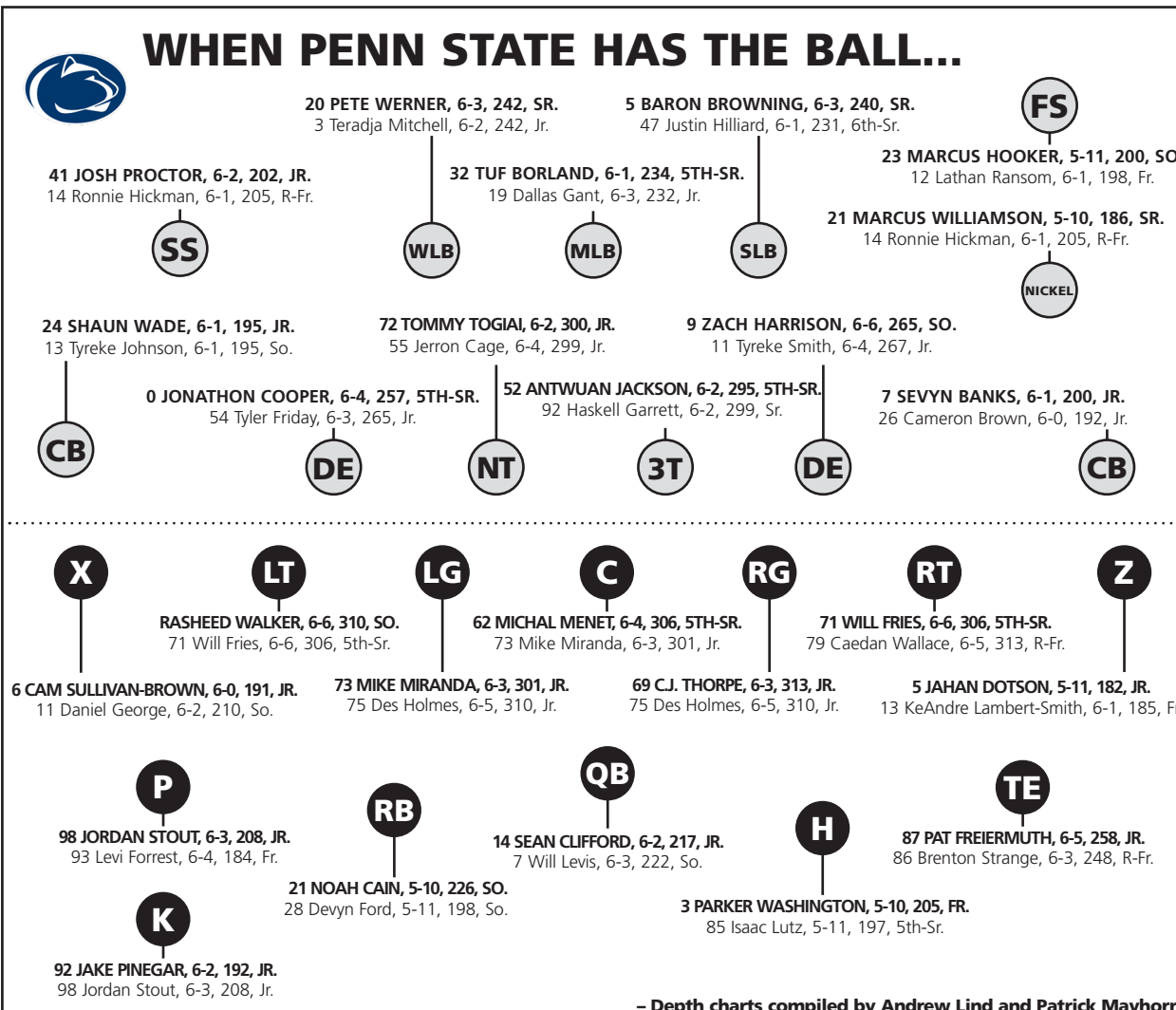
#### STAFF PREDICTION

This was likely going to be Ohio State's sternest test of the regular season, and PSU's shocking loss doesn't really change that. While Michigan is the rival, Penn State has recently been the challenger to OSU's conference supremacy. **OHIO STATE, 35-24**

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



### WHEN PENN STATE HAS THE BALL...



- Depth charts compiled by Andrew Lind and Patrick Mayhorn



# Happy Valley Almost House Of Horrors For OSU

By MATTHEW HAGER

*Throughout the fall, Buckeye Sports Bulletin will be "playing" its 40th Anniversary football season with recaps of the biggest Ohio State games of each corresponding week in our publishing history. The following is coverage of a key game in Ohio State's march to the 2014 national championship. The Buckeyes gutted out a 31-24 double-overtime victory over Penn State in a hostile environment with Joey Bosa and J.T. Barrett solidifying themselves as household names along the way. Additional features about the game will be posted at BuckeyeSports.com on Thursday, Oct. 29.*

J.T. Barrett and Joey Bosa came through in the clutch to allow the Ohio State football team to earn a 31-24 win in double overtime Oct. 25 at Penn State.

The redshirt freshman quarterback and sophomore defensive lineman made big plays in overtime to help the No. 13 Buckeyes (6-1, 3-0 Big Ten) escape Happy Valley after blowing a 17-0 halftime lead.

Barrett, who suffered a sprained knee in the first half, led a pair of touchdown drives in overtime play, and Bosa brought the game to a conclusion with a high-light reel-worthy sack of Penn State quarterback Christian Hackenberg on fourth down in the second overtime.

"Credit to our opponent," head coach Urban Meyer said. "They played their tails off. We'll take it. A great win against a quality opponent in one of the toughest environments that you'll have. We'll certainly get on a plane tonight and regroup but enjoy the win. We'll regroup as we continue on."

Overtime began with the Nittany Lions on offense after the Buckeyes won the coin toss and chose to play defense first. Ohio State seemingly caught a big break at the start of the possession when PSU lineman Brendan Mahon was flagged for a holding penalty on the first play of the drive. Unfortunately for the Buckeyes, Hackenberg quickly put the Nittany Lions back in business with an 18-yard pass to DaeSean Hamilton on first-and-20 at the 35.

Hackenberg rushed for 2 yards on a QB sneak on third-and-1 two plays later, and the quarterback then moved his team to the OSU 2 with a 12-yard connection to Hamilton. Three plays later, Penn State had the lead thanks to a 1-yard TD run by Bill Belton out of the wildcat. A Sam Ficken PAT gave PSU a 24-17 lead, its first of the game, and sent the white-clad portion of the 107,895 in attendance into a frenzy.

Despite deafening noise from Penn State's "White Out" crowd, Ohio State answered with a touchdown on its possession in the first OT. After Ezekiel Elliott rushed for 3 yards on the drive's first play, Barrett took care of the rest. First, he kept on an option run that went 17 yards, and Barrett then called his own number again for a 5-yard TD. Sean Nuernberger's PAT knotted the game and sent the teams into a second overtime.

Penn State was flagged for leaping, a personal foul, on the extra-point attempt, which allowed Ohio State to start the second overtime on offense at the 12-yard line. Again, it did not take the Buckeyes long to reach the end zone. Elliott rushed

for 2 yards on first down, and Barrett added 6 more on a scramble. Facing third-and-2 at the 4, Barrett again rushed on a QB keeper and this time pushed his way into the end zone.

Following the extra point, the Buckeyes held a 31-24 advantage.

The Ohio State defense made the lead hold.

Running back Akeel Lynch was swarmed by OSU linebackers Joshua Perry and Raekwon McMillan for no gain on Penn State's first play, and after Hackenberg threw a 5-yard pass to tight end Jesse James, the Buckeyes brought the game to an end. Hackenberg's third-down pass to Hamilton near the goal line fell incomplete, and on fourth down Bosa pushed Lynch into Hackenberg, forcing the quarterback to his knee to end the play and the game.

"Oh man, I was happy to win that game," freshman linebacker Darron Lee said of the final play. "When I saw who sacked the quarterback, I was like, 'Not surprised.' I was just really happy we got the win in a hostile environment. I'm just ready to go home."

There were a number of standouts in what was a defensive slugfest, as the game featured just 533 yards of total offense even with the two overtime periods. Ohio State saw its school-record four-game streak of 50-point games come to a close, and the Buckeyes – who finished with 293 yards – were held below 500 for the first time since a Sept. 6 loss to Virginia Tech.

Hamilton established a new Penn State record with 14 catches, while Nittany Lions senior Mike Hull had 19 tackles, one more than his OSU counterpart at linebacker, Perry.

## Tale Of Two Halves

Ohio State got a big gift from the officials early in the first quarter. The Buckeyes won the toss and deferred. Penn State began on offense and recorded two first downs before facing a first-and-10 from its own 36. Hackenberg dropped back to pass and was almost immediately under pressure from Lee. Hurried, Hackenberg threw an off-balance pass that was intercepted by a diving Vonn Bell.

The officials ruled that the OSU sophomore safety caught the pass, but replay showed that the ball clearly hit the turf. However, officials said the replay review equipment was not working properly and thus they could not overturn the call, keeping the ball in the Buckeyes' possession.

The Buckeyes took advantage of their good fortune. Taking over at the PSU 39, the Buckeyes needed seven plays to reach the end zone. Elliott rushed four times for 21 yards, the last 10 coming on a touchdown run behind tight ends Nick Vannett and Jeff Heurman over the left side. Nuernberger's PAT made it 7-0 Ohio State with 10:15 left on the first-quarter clock.

The visitors later added to their lead with a 49-yard field goal by Nuernberger. The career-long boot by the freshman came at the end of a 14-play, 59-yard drive that began at the OSU 9 and encompassed the end of the first quarter and beginning of the second. The Buckeyes drove all the way to the PSU 17 before a pair of false start penalties and a sack of Barrett on a third-and-16 pushed the ball back to the 32.

The Buckeyes actually caught another

## Other Big 40th Anniversary Games

There were several other big games at this time throughout the years, many of which were more interesting in retrospect than impactful on their respective seasons. They include the following:

**1994:** In one of the more embarrassing losses of the John Cooper era, No. 1 Penn State destroyed No. 21 Ohio State, 63-14, in Happy Valley. The Lions, sparked by central Ohio native Ki-Jana Carter's three TDs, jumped out to a 35-0 halftime lead and never looked back. Carter scored four touchdowns for the game.

**2000:** Ohio State took a 27-24 lead over Purdue on a short run by Jerry Westbrook with 2:16 remaining after Mike Doss intercepted Drew Brees and returned the theft 33 yards to the Boiler 2. But Brees found Seth Morales with a 64-yard scoring strike just 21 seconds later to give Purdue a 31-27 home win.

**2002:** Chris Gamble scored No. 4 Ohio State's only touchdown on a 40-yard interception return helping the Buckeyes defeat Penn State 13-7 for a key win in the march to the national championship. Ohio State (9-0) had just 253 yards of total offense, but the Buckeye defense held PSU to only 179.

**2008:** With No. 9 Ohio State at midfield and leading No. 3 Penn State 6-3 in the fourth quarter, freshman quarterback Terrelle Pryor faced a third-and-one. Rather than run the called quarterback sneak, Pryor freelanced in hopes of a larger gain and fumbled the ball over to the Lions. PSU drove 38 yards on seven plays to take a 10-6 lead on the way to a 13-6 win in Ohio Stadium.

**2011:** In what might have been the biggest win in Luke Fickell's lone season coaching Ohio State, Braxton Miller threw a 40-yard touchdown pass to Devin Smith with 20 seconds remaining for an improbable 33-29 win over No. 12 Wisconsin.

**2013:** It took Ohio State almost 20 years to gain retribution, but the No. 4 Buckeyes defeated Penn State by the same 63-14 score as the Lions had done in 1994. Ohio State racked up 686 yards of total offense, and Miller threw for three TDs and rushed for two more.

**2017:** Host Ohio State scored two touchdowns in the final 4:20 to defeat No. 2 Penn State, 39-38. J.T. Barrett fired scoring strikes to Johnnie Dixon and Marcus Baugh to secure the victory. The No. 6 Buckeyes had trailed by double digits for much of the game.

break on the field goal, as the kick came well after the play clock had expired. The officials did not see the infraction, however, and Ohio State extended its lead to 10-0 with 11:07 left before halftime.

The Ohio State defense helped set up the Buckeyes' next score.

A 48-yard punt by OSU sophomore Cameron Johnston was caught at the PSU 10-yard line, and the Buckeyes defense forced two incompletions before Lee and Bosa combined on Ohio State's first sack of Hackenberg on the night. That 6-yard loss forced a punt from the Penn State end zone, giving the Ohio State offense a short field to work with.

Barrett then led a short touchdown drive. With OSU taking over at the PSU 39, Barrett and Elliott had a hand in all of the yards on the way to the end zone. Elliott rushed for 19 yards on three carries, Barrett rushed for 5 yards and completed two passes for 15 yards – including a 1-yard TD connection with Heurman.

After Nuernberger added the PAT, the Buckeyes held what looked like a commanding 17-0 lead with 3:58 remaining in the second quarter. That score held into halftime, marking the first time Penn State had been shut out at home in the first half since Nov. 12, 2011, vs. Nebraska.

The Nittany Lions stole momentum early in the third quarter.

The Buckeyes started the second half on offense and quickly faced a third-and-6 from the OSU 37, where Barrett was picked off by Penn State's Anthony Zettel. The PSU defensive tackle dropped back into coverage, and Barrett threw the ball right to him. Zettel rumbled all the way down the field for a pick-six which, following a Ficken PAT, cut the Penn State deficit to 17-7 just 1:23 after halftime.

The interception was Barrett's first in 111 pass attempts and his first since the Kent State game Sept. 13. It was also Penn State's first pick-six since 2009.

Ohio State saw a scoring opportunity go by the wayside later in the third quarter. Taking over after a Penn State punt at the OSU 30, the Buckeyes drove 47 yards – all on the ground – with four dif-

ferent players lining up at quarterback for at least a play. In addition to Barrett and sophomore backup quarterback Cardale Jones, hybrid players Jalin Marshall and Dontre Wilson each took snaps in the wildcat formation.

The drive was halted at the PSU 23, though, and Nuernberger attempted a 41-yard field goal, which sailed wide right. Following the field-goal miss, Penn State drove 32 yards aided in large part by a 15-yard pass interference penalty by OSU cornerback Eli Apple on a third-down play. But the Ohio State defense stood tall, forcing a turnover in OSU territory. Hackenberg was picked off for the second time on the night, this time by safety Tyvis Powell at the 30.

The Nittany Lions' offense finally got moving early in the fourth quarter, thanks in part to the Buckeyes. Barrett was intercepted on his first pass attempt of the final quarter, giving Penn State the ball at the OSU 45 following the pick by Hull. It took Penn State eight plays to reach the end zone for the first time on offense. Hackenberg, on a rare play during which he had plenty of time in the pocket, threw a ball to the right side of the end zone. That's where Penn State freshman Saeed Blacknall and Apple engaged in a one-on-one battle for the jump ball, one that Blacknall won for a touchdown.

Ficken's PAT made it 17-14 with 11:08 left in regulation.

Both teams struggled to find any more offensive success until Penn State's final drive of regulation. The Nittany Lions began the march on the PSU 9 after a 41-yard Johnston punt with 2:58 remaining. Hackenberg converted three third downs – twice on QB sneaks and one on a 5-yard pass to James – in guiding the Lions down the field. Ohio State also gave Penn State a first down on a roughing-the-passer penalty. In all, Penn State needed 18 plays to set up a 31-yard Ficken field goal that tied the game with nine seconds left in regulation.

*This story originally appeared in the Nov. 1, 2014, issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.*



# Buckeyes' Defense Stood Tall On Road To Victory

By JEFF SVOBODA

Under former coach Jim Tressel, the Ohio State football team occasionally would "win the surest way," as the head coach called it. The coach, who abhorred critical mistakes seemingly more than he enjoyed big plays, would see his team take a lead and then batten down the hatches on offense, content to put the game in the hands of his generally more-than-capable defense.

On the other hand, things have been different under head coach Urban Meyer, an aggressive, foot-on-the-throat, offense-loving marauder who has overseen record-shattering attack units and shaky defenses in his two previous years at the helm.

It's not that Meyer doesn't enjoy a good defense, as well, it's just that his first couple of teams for a variety of reasons were led by the offenses. By the end of last season, injuries, a lack of depth and coaching miscommunications left the defense as the clear trouble spot on the team, and the number 112 – the team's ranking in passing yards allowed per game by the end of last season – was what people thought of when it came to the Silver Bullets at the end of 2013.

Even at the start of this season, the offense and redshirt freshman quarterback J.T. Barrett were the ones making headlines. OSU scored at least 50 points in four games in a row to set a new school record and also topped 500 yards in the same four contests to reach that mark in consecutive games for the first time since 1998.

So when the offense couldn't get things going for much of the night in Happy Valley on Oct. 25, for the first time in quite a while, it was up to the defense to bow up and make the plays needed to win the game.

It wasn't always pretty, but in the end, the defense felt like it could puff its chests out after the 31-24, double-overtime victory.

"We know that if the offense can't convert on some stuff, we have to go out there and stop them," redshirt freshman linebacker Darron Lee said. "That's our job. That's what Coach Meyer reiterates to us, to stop them, and that's our job. I felt like we did that for a long time in the game. I felt we were dominating a lot of the game, and we knew at the end in OT, we had to finish and we did just that."

There was a lot to like about the defense's performance, with the fact that it held Penn State to just 208 yards of offense through the 60 minutes of regulation. For the entire game, the Buckeyes allowed just 16 rushing yards on 31 tries to the Nittany Lions, and quarterback Christian Hackenberg had to work for his yards, needing 31 completions and 49 passes to reach 224 yards through the air.

The defense was nearly impenetrable through the opening three quarters, holding Penn State to just seven first downs and 89 yards of total offense on nine possessions in that span. The stress also increased on the unit as the OSU offense struggled to get in gear in the third quarter, and the Buckeyes allowed only a pick-six in the opening 45 minutes when it came to the scoreboard and intercepted Hackenberg twice.

"They relied on us and we stepped up

to the challenge," sophomore safety Vonn Bell said. "We kept on getting three-and-outs, three-and-outs. We told them put the game on us and we'll get it for you."

The foundation did crack some in the fourth quarter, especially as another OSU turnover added to Penn State's increasing momentum. Barrett threw an interception on his first pass of the fourth quarter to Mike Hull, who returned the ball to the OSU 45.

Eight plays later, the Nittany Lions were in the end zone courtesy of a 24-yard pass from Hackenberg to one-time OSU recruit Saeed Blacknall in a drive kept alive by a roughing-the-passer penalty on Joey Bosa.

Penn State also moved 77 yards in 19 plays in 2:49 in the dying moments to tie the game. The Nittany Lions never netted the big play that made their comeback bid easier but did move down the field in small chunks, converting three third downs and again being bailed out of a long down-and-distance scenario by a roughing-the-passer penalty, this one on Curtis Grant.

But the Buckeyes stiffened and had solid coverage on Hackenberg's one throw into the end zone, forcing a field goal that led to overtime. There, OSU gave up a touchdown on its first possession but answered the bell in the second, holding the Nittany Lions to a four-and-out that ended the game.

"When you've got the momentum you've got to keep it, and when you lose it you've got to find a way to get it," defensive coordinator Luke Fickell said. "The momentum shifted there going into the overtime. Our guys bowed up, our offense bowed up and as a group and as a team I think they all just came together. It's great to see."

Lee said that allowing three scores in four drives after not allowing any through the first nine Penn State possessions was frustrating, but the goal when the team took the field for the second overtime was to make sure the offense didn't have to take the field again.

"We just buckled down," said Lee, who had 1½ sacks and was a constant presence in the PSU backfield. "We couldn't give up a touchdown (at the end of regulation), we knew that for sure. We gave up the field goal, and it was like, 'All right, let's go to overtime and finish the game.' We did just that. We were all looking around at each other like, 'Let's buckle down and go win this game and finish this game.'"

Lee was far from the only standout on defense, a list that also included Bosa and his 2½ sacks including the game winner. Junior linebacker Joshua Perry was around the ball all game, finishing with a career-high 18 tackles, while sophomore safety Tyvis Powell had seven tackles and an interception and Adolphus Washington chipped in a sack.

Team efforts such as that are exactly what the Buckeyes will be looking for as they come down the stretch.

"Anytime you go through adversity like that, it's going to help you in the long run," Fickell said. "This is still a young group of guys, a young team that's – things like this that you go through are what really make you great. You can't get this any other way other than doing it on the road in a great environment like this. This is a great learning and growing experience for all of us."

*This story originally appeared in the Nov. 1, 2014, issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin.*

## The Numbers Game

### Ohio State 31, Penn State 24 (2OT)

Oct. 25, 2014 — Beaver Stadium; University Park, Pa.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT1	OT2	F
OHIO STATE	7	10	0	0	7	7	31
PENN STATE	0	0	7	10	7	0	24

#### First Quarter

OSU — Elliott, 10 yard run (Nuernberger kick), 10:15; 7 plays, 39 yards, 2:52 TOP.

#### Second Quarter

OSU — Nuernberger, 49 yard field goal, 11:07; 14 plays, 59 yards, 7:31 TOP.

OSU — Heuerman, 1 yard pass from Barrett (Nuernberger kick), 3:58; 6 plays, 39 yards, 2:20 TOP.

#### Third Quarter

PSU — Zettel, 40 yard interception return (Ficken kick), 13:37.

#### Fourth Quarter

PSU — Zettel, 40 yard interception return (Ficken kick), 13:37.

PSU — Ficken, 31 yard field goal, 0:09; 19 plays, 77 yards, 2:49 TOP.

#### First Overtime

PSU — Belton, 1 yard run (Ficken kick); 7 plays, 25 yards.

OSU — Barrett, 5 yard run (Nuernberger kick); 3 plays, 25 yards.

#### Second Overtime

OSU — Barrett, 4 yard run (Nuernberger kick); 3 plays, 25 yards.

Att. — 107,895.

Weather — 57-71 degrees, pleasant and breezy; wind W 9-15 mph.

#### Team Statistics

	OSU	PSU
First Downs	19	20
Rushing	14	5
Passing	4	11
Penalty	1	4
Rushes-Yards	57-219	31-16
Passing Yards	74	224
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	12-19-2	31-50-2
Offensive Plays	76	81
Total Net Yards	293	240
Third Down Efficiency	7-18	8-18
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-2	0-1
Punts-Avg.	6-45.0	8-34.5
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	1-0
Penalties	8-70	4-42
Time of Possession	34:33	25:27

#### Individual Statistics

**RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.)** – OSU: Elliott 26-109; Barrett 20-75; Wilson 5-20; Marshall 3-19; C.Jones 1-0; TEAM 2-(-4). PSU: Lynch 13-38; Belton 9-8; Hamilton 1-(-3); Hackenberg 8-(-27).

**PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD)** – OSU: Barrett 12-19-2-74-1. PSU: Hackenberg 31-49-2-224-1; TEAM 0-1-0-0-0.

**RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.)** – OSU: Heuerman 3-19; Marshall 2-9; Wilson 1-14; Samuel 1-9; De.Smith 1-8; Elliott 1-7; Vannett 1-6; M.Thomas 1-3; Spencer 1-(-1). PSU: Hamilton 14-126; Blacknall 4-34; James 4-22; Godwin 3-16; Belton 2-5; E.Lewis 1-11; K.Carter 1-4; Lynch 1-3; Gesicki 1-3.

**PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long)** – OSU: Johnston 6-45.0-59. PSU: Gulla 4-37.5-43; Pasquariello 4-31.5-45.

**PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** – OSU: Marshall 3-(-4). PSU: Della Valle 2-5.

**KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** – OSU: Wilson 3-81. PSU: Haley 2-35.

**MISSED FIELD GOALS (Yds.)** – OSU: Nuernberger (41). PSU: None.

**FORCED FUMBLES** – OSU: Apple. PSU: None.

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

**INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.)** – OSU: Powell 1-0; V.Bell 1-0. PSU: Zettel 1-40; Hull 1-12.

**SACKS (No.-Yds.)** – OSU: Bosa 2.5-18; Lee 1.5-10; Washington 1.0-7. PSU: Barnes 1.0-9; B.Bell 1.0-7; Zettel 1.0-3.

**TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.)** – OSU: Bosa 2.5-18; Lee 2.5-13; Perry 2.0-7; Washington 1.5-8; Schutt 1.0-3; Powell 1.0-2; S.Miller 0.5-1. PSU: Hull 2.5-7; Barnes 1.5-10; B.Bell 1.0-7; Nassib 1.0-6; Zettel 1.0-3.

**TACKLES (Solo-Asst.-Tot.)** – OSU: Perry 12-6-18; Powell 5-2-7; Bosa 4-2-6; Lee 4-1-5; C.Grant 4-0-4; Apple 3-1-4; Reeves 3-1-4; Washington 2-2-4; S.Miller 1-3-4; V.Bell 3-0-3; Bennett 2-0-2; McMillan 0-2-2; De.Smith 1-0-1; Spencer 1-0-1; Clinton 1-0-1; C.Worley 1-0-1; Schutt 1-0-1; Haynes 0-1-1; Karageorge 0-1-1; TEAM 0-1-1; D.Grant 0-1-1. PSU: Hull 7-12-19; B.Bell 5-8-13; Marcus Allen 4-7-11; Olaniyan 2-7-9; Wartman 2-7-9; Amos 3-4-7; Barnes 1-6-7; Della Valle 2-2-4; A.Johnson 0-4-4; T.Williams 1-2-3; Lynch 2-0-2; Haley 1-1-2; Zettel 1-1-2; Lucas 0-2-2; Nassib 1-0-1; Walker 1-0-1; Zanellato 0-1-1; Cothren 0-1-1; Bars 0-1-1.

**PLAYERS IN THE GAME – OHIO STATE:** Offense, Decker, Price, Boren, Elflein, Baldwin, Heuerman, Spencer, Barrett, Elliott, M.Thomas, De.Smith, Nuernberger. Defense, Bosa, Washington, Bennett, S.Miller, Lee, C.Grant, Perry, Apple, Powell, V.Bell, D.Grant, Johnston. **PENN STATE:** Offense, Nelson, Gaia, Mangiro, Mahon, Do.Smith, Hackenberg, Belton, James, E.Lewis, Hamilton, Godwin, Ficken. Defense, Olaniyan, Zettel, A.Johnson, Barnes, Wartman, Hull, B.Bell, Lucas, Allen, Amos, T.Williams, Gulla.



# Recruiting Takes Back Seat This Season At OSU

Ohio State's season opener against Nebraska felt unfamiliar for a number of reasons, including – but not limited to – the lack of fans tailgating outside the stadium before kickoff and the extremely limited crowd inside the historic venue during the game.

## RECRUITING OUTLOOK Andrew Lind

It was a bit different for the recruiting staff, too, as they're accustomed to hosting hundreds of prospects on official and unofficial visits. But with the NCAA-mandated dead period extended through at least the end of the year, the Buckeyes will not be able to show off their facilities or the culture that is critical to the program's successes on and off the field.

"It's been difficult, for them, mostly," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said during a Zoom meeting with reporters on Oct. 13 of those involved in recruiting. "I feel really bad for the recruits and their families that they haven't been able to be here. We know what this is. We've been able to get a good feel for our recruits and their families, and we feel really, really strongly that we have a great fit in this

class. But there's just been some guys that haven't had the opportunity to come spend time in our culture, around our campus and around our players."

Of course, bringing prospects and their families to campus from all corners of the country in the middle of a pandemic would put the season – and Ohio State's national title hopes – at risk. So the Buckeyes are more than happy to put visits on the back burner for the time being, even if that means it will be highly unlikely they will be able to host someone like Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic five-star defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau before he makes his college decision.

"The cool thing is I think they communicate with the guys that have been around, and they get a feel for it that way," Day said. "But I think when they do get here they're just going to love it even more. There's not much we can do about it."

"Is it difficult? Sure, it's hard. But we're making the best of it. It's the same across the board. It's just like we mention with everything else and find that right fit. There's still a couple more spots that we're working at and trying to figure out what that is, and hopefully we're able to get guys on campus in January."

### Commits, Targets Gather For Buckeye Bash

Luckily for Day and the rest of his staff, the members of Ohio State's 2021 recruiting class took it upon themselves to orga-

nize an unofficial gathering of commits and top targets during the weekend of Oct. 24.

The Buckeye Bash, as it's being referred to, was hosted by Pickerington (Ohio) North five-star defensive end Jack Sawyer and included the following Ohio State commits: Hopewell, Va., five-star running back TreVeyon Henderson; Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep five-star quarterback Kyle McCord; Massillon (Ohio) Washington four-star wide receiver Jayden Ballard; Streetsboro, Ohio, four-star defensive tackle Mike Hall; Cornelius (N.C.) William Amos Hough four-star running back Evan Pryor; Richfield (Ohio) Revere four-star offensive guard Ben Christman; Manassas (Va.) Unity Reed four-star defensive tackle Tyleik Williams; Scottsdale (Ariz.) Saguaro four-star cornerback Denzel Burke; Cincinnati La Salle three-star safety Jaylen Johnson; Aurora (Colo.) Cherokee Trail three-star tight end Sam Hart; and Floyds Knobs (Ind.) Floyd Central three-star offensive tackle Zen Michalski.

Uncommitted players such as Fairfax (Va.) Robinson Secondary five-star offensive tackle Tristan Leigh and his younger brother, Aidan, an unranked offensive tackle in the class of 2023, were supposed to attend but did not make the trip after their mother fell ill. Monroeville (Pa.) Gateway four-star safety Derrick Davis, on the other hand, was in attendance.

Sources told Buckeye Sports Bulletin most of the players stayed overnight at Sawyer's house on Friday night. The group then watched Ohio State's season-opening

win over Nebraska at Buffalo Wild Wings, checked out campus and then hung out for the rest of the evening, playing video games and watching other college football games.

However, the players were unable to visit the Woody Hayes Athletic Center or meet with any coaches while on campus.

"We just have to stay out of all that," Day said. "If we ever hear of anything, we immediately call (associate athletic director for compliance) Justin Kume in our compliance and make sure everything's being followed – first off, from NCAA compliance protocol but also from COVID and other things like that."

"We can't really get involved with that, but at the same time we understand that some of these guys really want to be a part of this thing."

### Pandemic's Impact On Quarterback Recruiting

It's been well-documented that Ohio State doesn't like to offer a quarterback without first seeing him throw in person, so the extended dead period – coupled with the lack of one-day camps last summer – has made that impossible for first-year Ohio State quarterbacks coach Corey Dennis.

"It's definitely a lot harder (to evaluate)," Dennis said during a teleconference on Oct. 13. "At the quarterback position, you hope you get to see guys throw. You hope you get to meet a guy, talk with a guy. So you're trying to do the best you can."

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# ASK AN ANALYST

## With Buckeye Scoop's Marc Givler

**What's the latest in Ohio State's pursuit of Fairfax (Va.) Robinson Secondary five-star offensive tackle Tristan Leigh, who was supposed to attend Buckeye Bash but did not make it because his mother was sick?**

"I still have Ohio State running third for Leigh at the moment. There was always a chance things just clicked with the commits this weekend and made a change for him, but I think there is still a lot of work to be done for Ohio State to end up landing the five-star tackle. He has been to LSU so many times and has such a comfort level there, and his relationship with Oklahoma five-star quarterback commit Caleb Williams is probably a stronger one than anything he has going on with the Buckeyes at the moment."

**Ohio State has been recruiting Monroeville (Pa.) Gateway four-star safety Derrick Davis for much of the last three years. Now set to make his college decision on Nov. 7, where do you think he ends up and how does his decision impact the Buckeyes?**

"I have been in the minority on this one for a while, so I might as well just stay there. I still have Ohio State landing Davis. They have been recruiting him hard since his freshman year, he has really good relationships with Matt Barnes and Ryan Day, and I think he's closest with the Ohio State commits compared to his other his top choices. He also continually mentions the size of Columbus and the business opportunities that it can create after football."

"At this point, Ohio State is set in the secondary, so Davis is really icing on the cake and a player that is simply too good to pass up. If they missed here, I don't think there would be any efforts to go out and find another safety."

**Though still early, how many wide receivers do you anticipate Ohio State taking in the 2022 recruiting class, and how does St. Louis Cardinal Ritter College Prep five-star Luther Burden's recent commitment to Oklahoma impact the Buckeyes' pursuit of other players at the position?**

"They have been picky so far, but a lot of that is the lack of evaluation opportunities. I believe they'll settle in around three receivers when the dust settles and continue to chase the top guys in the nation, including Burden despite his early commitment. I think the spring evaluation period – fingers crossed that we have it – will go a long way toward determining how wide the net gets cast here or if they just continue to zero in on a handful of guys."

**How do you think the NCAA's decision to grant an extra year of eligibility to student-athletes regardless of whether they play this season impacts Ohio State's recruiting efforts moving forward, particularly in terms of the number of players they take in future classes?**

"I actually don't think this will have too much impact on Ohio State. There will be a few guys where it makes sense to have them come back (quarterback Gunnar Hoak, perhaps), but for the most part the guys who are legitimate NFL prospects will leave and the guys who aren't will probably have to move on."

Everyone's kind of adapting to the new norm with the Zoom calls and watching things on film. It definitely is a challenge, but we're definitely finding ways to figure it out, keep finding kids, keep evaluating and meeting kids, talking to kids and trying to progress the best way we can."

Ohio State has offered just four quarterbacks in the 2022 recruiting cycle thus far, including Southlake (Texas) Carroll five-star Quinn Ewers; Tiger (Ga.) Rabun County five-star Gunner Stockton; Gardena (Calif.) Junipero Serra five-star Maalik Murphy; and Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic three-star Steve Angeli. Ewers and Stockton committed in August to Texas and South Carolina, respectively, while Murphy remains at the top of the Buckeyes' list of priorities, though building the relationship from afar amid all of the restrictions has been difficult.

Other players at the position to keep in mind as potential offer candidates include Valdosta (Ga.) Lowndes four-star Jacurri Brown; Medina, Ohio, three-star Drew Allar; and Centerville, Ohio, three-star Chase Harrison. But with freshmen Jack Miller and C.J. Stroud already on campus and McCord set to enroll in classes this winter, quarterback isn't a significant need for Ohio State in 2022.

"I think recruiting, as you guys know, always changes," Dennis said. "We're definitely not going to take a guy just because we need to take a quarterback every cycle. But we're definitely going to do what's best for Ohio State, especially in the quarterback room."

Even if they're not able to evaluate prospects to their liking, Dennis believes the Buckeyes will continue to be a top

destination for elite signal-callers so long as Day is the head coach.

"I think that the system is definitely pretty similar to an NFL passing game type of system," Dennis said. "Coach Day is arguably one of the best quarterbacks coaches in the United States of America. What he does with the offense is unbelievable. How he takes care of his quarterbacks is unbelievable. Ultimately, when you have a play caller who is also the head coach and who also has a quarterback background, that's unbelievably valuable for a quarterback."

### Day Helps Dennis On Recruiting Trail

In September, 247Sports named Dennis and offensive quality control coach Keenan Bailey as two of college football's 30 rising stars under the age of 30. It came as no surprise to Day to see Dennis – who was hired this offseason to replace the departed Mike Yurcich – on the list, particularly because of his previous work with former quarterback Dwayne Haskins and current starter Justin Fields.

"He's got a lot of assets, and he's got a lot of value here," Day said. "First off, he's very loyal. He grew up in this world. His dad was a coach and an athletic director. He understands football and he believes in what we believe in here. I think that's important. He's really sharp and he connects well with the players, and because of all those things, he's of a lot of value to all of us here. His recruiting, he's got a bright future ahead of him. We're very pleased with what Corey's done so far and excited to see where it goes."

Day's reputation as a developer of quar-

## OSU Football Verbal Commitments

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
Jayden Ballard	WR	6-2	175	★★★★	Massillon (Ohio) Washington
Denzel Burke	CB	6-0	189	★★★★	Scottsdale (Ariz.) Saguaro
Reid Carrico	LB	6-3	225	★★★★	Ironton, Ohio
Ben Christman	OT	6-6	299	★★★★	Richfield (Ohio) Revere
Jantzen Dunn	CB	6-2	178	★★★★	Bowling Green (Ky.) South Warren
Michael Hall	DT	6-3	290	★★★★	Streetsboro, Ohio
Jordan Hancock	CB	6-1	170	★★★★	Suwanee (Ga.) North Gwinnett
Marvin Harrison	WR	6-3	190	★★★★	Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep
Sam Hart	TE	6-5	225	★★★	Aurora (Colo.) Cherokee Trail
TreVeyon Henderson	RB	5-11	195	★★★★★	Hopewell, Va.
Donovan Jackson	OG	6-4	308	★★★★★	Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal
Jakailin Johnson	CB	6-1	175	★★★★	St. Louis De Smet Jesuit
Jaylen Johnson	S	6-1	200	★★★	Cincinnati La Salle
Kyle McCord	QB	6-3	215	★★★★★	Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep
Zen Michalski	OT	6-7	288	★★★	Floyds Knobs (Ind.) Floyd Central
Jesse Mirco	P	6-3	200	★★★	Fremantle, Western Australia
Evan Pryor	RB	5-10	190	★★★★	Cornelius (N.C.) W.A. Hough
Jack Sawyer	DE	6-5	248	★★★★★	Pickerington (Ohio) North
Andre Turrentine	S	6-0	175	★★★★	Nashville (Tenn.) Ensworth
Tyleik Williams	DT	6-3	330	★★★★	Manassas (Va.) Unity Reed

Players in the class of 2022 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Jyaire Brown	CB	5-11	165	★★★★	West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West
Bennett Christian	TE	6-6	235	★★★	Acworth (Ga.) Allatoona
C.J. Hicks	LB	6-4	218	★★★★	Kettering (Ohio) Archbishop Alter
Dasan McCullough	ATH	6-5	220	★★★★	Overland Park (Kan.) B.V. North
Gabe Powers	LB	6-4	220	★★★★★	Marysville, Ohio
Tegra Tshabola	OT	6-5	340	★★★★	West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West

terbacks will undoubtedly make up for Dennis' lack of experience on the recruiting trail. After all, his previous position – which Bailey has since assumed – did not allow him to leave campus for recruiting

purposes.

"I think it's a very, very exciting time here to be part of the passing game," Day

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# 2021 All-American Bowl Canceled Amid Pandemic

Continued From Page 25

said. "I think I took it as a personal challenge to have that quarterback room be in the Heisman conversation year in and year out. We've had a lot of those here at Ohio State, but it's certainly a challenge to get guys drafted in the first round and that's what Ohio State has a great history of at all positions.

"Now, the last couple years, we've had some really good quarterbacks here, and it's an exciting time to be a quarterback here and I think recruits see that."

## In-State Lineman Trims List To Five

When Ohio State extended a scholarship offer to Strongsville, Ohio, four-star offensive tackle Blake Miller on April 24, many prognosticators believed it was a matter of time before he pledged his services to the Buckeyes.

But fast-forward to Oct. 19 and the 6-6, 315-pound Miller – who is considered the

24th-best offensive tackle and No. 210 prospect overall in the class of 2022 – has only just narrowed his lengthy list of scholarship offers to Auburn, Clemson, Florida, Michigan and Ohio State.

Miller is quite familiar with the Buckeyes, having visited campus several times in the past alongside his former teammate and 2019 Michigan State offensive guard signee J.D. Duplain. That's allowed him to build a relationship with Day and offensive line coach Greg Studrawa, who are encouraging him to take his time with the process.

Miller – whose father attended Ohio State – has also been to Clemson and Michigan. He hopes to visit Auburn and Florida before making his college decision sometime before the start of his senior year.

The Buckeyes, meanwhile, already have one commitment at offensive tackle for the 2022 recruiting class in West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star Tegra Tshabola. It's still too early to tell how many players the staff will target at the position, but other names to keep in mind include

Daleville (Va.) Lord Botetourt five-star Gunner Givens; Lynchburg (Va.) Liberty Christian Academy five-star Zach Rice; Fond Du Lac (Wisc.) St. Mary's Springs four-star Billy Schrauth; and Charlestown, Ind., four-star Kiyunta Goodwin.

## Offensive Tackle Down To Four

Speaking of Schrauth, he included Ohio State in his final four schools on Oct. 16 alongside Michigan, Notre Dame and Wisconsin.

The 6-5, 285-pound Schrauth – who is considered the 17th-best offensive tackle and No. 153 prospect overall in the class of 2022 – has never been to campus but landed an offer from co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison during a virtual tour in April. Their relationship goes back several years, as Schrauth attended a one-day camp at Michigan in 2017 when Mattison was still the Wolverines' defensive line coach.

Schrauth, who also talks weekly with Day, Studrawa and graduate assistant

Kennedy Cook, plans to visit once the aforementioned dead period comes to a close. Until that happens, though, the Badgers will be the perceived favorite in his recruitment.

## NBC Cancels All-American Bowl

According to a press release from NBC Sports, the 2021 All-American Bowl has been canceled. So, too, has the underclassman combine that traditionally takes place at the Alamodome in San Antonio the same week.

"Our priority is on the health and safety of players, their friends and family, and everyone associated with the Bowl," said Gary Quinn, NBC Sports vice president of programming and owned properties, in a statement. "While we will miss the Bowl in San Antonio this year, we look forward to celebrating all 100 athletes joining the All-American Bowl family and recognizing their hard work and dedication on Jan. 2 on NBC."

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

### 35 Years Ago – 1985

The high school gridirons were full of outstanding performances the weekend of Oct. 18-19. One of the best efforts was by Greg Frey, a quarterback at Cincinnati St. Xavier. Frey, a 6-2 senior, completed 28 of 54 passes for 487 yards and four touchdowns in a 56-42 loss to Cincinnati Moeller. His figures were reportedly the best ever recorded in Ohio and the sixth-best single-game yardage total in high school football history.

On the other side of the line in the same game, Moeller's Vada Murray, a 6-5 senior defensive back rated among the top 50 players in the country, made life miserable for Frey by intercepting four passes. Both players held serious interest from Ohio State.

### 30 Years Ago – 1990

When asked what position star lineman Dan Wilkerson could play in college, Dayton Dunbar coach Tom Montgomery had a simple answer.

"Anywhere he wants," Montgomery told BSB shortly after Wilkerson helped to secure a playoff spot and a 7-2 record for Dunbar through Oct. 18.

The same could likely be said about Wilkinson's college prospects.

The 6-5, 290-pound senior was a four-year starter on Dunbar's offensive line and a three-year starter at defensive tackle. Montgomery said Wilkinson was just as proficient regardless of which side of the ball he lined up on.

"To me, he is the best I've ever had as a two-way tackle," said the veteran Dunbar head coach. "He has tremendous speed. Last year he ran a 4.9 in the 40 and he was lugging around 300 pounds. This year, he is so much quicker.

"I've talked to a lot of recruiters, and some say offense and some say defense. Whatever they take him as, they are going to get a good ballplayer. I guess it will depend on who wants him and what system they use."

Wilkinson, known as "Big Daddy," was rated by national recruiting expert Tom Lemming as one of the top 10 players in the state of Ohio.

### 25 Years Ago – 1995

As BSB was going to press, it was learned that Westerville (Ohio) South star linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer was slated to hold a commitment press conference Oct. 26 at his high school.

Katzenmoyer, one of the nation's top 25 players, was set to decide between the Buckeyes, Penn State, Nebraska and Michigan. He had unofficially visited every place on his list, so there was apparently no reason to hold off of his choice.

"I know where he's going, but he asked me not to say anything," South coach Rocky Pentello said. "If he knows where he's going, there's no reason for him to wait."

Lemming predicted that Ohio State would be the landing spot for Katzenmoyer, a member of Ohio's "big three" along with Columbus DeSales tailback/defensive back Gary Berry and Dublin

Scioto tailback Nick Goings.

"I'm predicting that all three will end up at Ohio State," Lemming said. "It may take a couple of months or so because they are all good players and they may want to go through the recruiting process."

### 20 Years Ago – 2000

Ohio State was still recruiting a number of top seniors around Ohio and, certainly, around the country.

But the Buckeyes were also already forming opinions on and making offers to a number of top junior prospects. If reports were correct, the Buckeyes had already offered at least five and perhaps several more of the state's top junior prospects.

The most high-profile junior prospect in Ohio was Justin Zwick, the quarterback at Massillon Washington who was already within striking distance of the state career passing yardage mark.

Zwick (6-4, 210, 4.67) transferred to Massillon in the summer of 2000 after spending his first two years at Orrville, where he helped the Red Raiders win the Division III state title in 1998.

Ohio State and Kentucky had both already offered and may have been the top two schools in the running for Zwick, who had attended a game earlier in the season at OSU. He had also attended summer camp at Kentucky previously, and UK – given the success of Tim Couch and the Wildcats' passing game – looked tough to beat.

### 15 Years Ago – 2005

Oct. 14 was not a banner day for Grant Schwartz. In the midst of his Dana Point (Calif.) Dana Hills team's 40-8 loss to powerhouse Mission Viejo, Calif., Schwartz was relegated to the sidelines with a separated shoulder.

However, some of the disappointment was tempered a few days later when Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel called Schwartz to let him know that the Buckeyes were officially extending a scholarship offer.

"It was definitely a dream come true," Schwartz told BSB.

Those weren't just the words of a high school senior impressed by the attention by one of the country's premier college football programs. Schwartz's ties to Ohio State went much deeper than that. His father, Brian, played under both Woody Hayes and Earle Bruce in the late 1970s, and Schwartz had long been a follower of the Buckeyes.

At one time, it appeared as if Schwartz's connection to the university could lead to an immediate commitment if and when OSU offered a scholarship. But as the recruiting process went on, several schools – particularly Oregon – had been persistent in recruiting Schwartz. But the Buckeyes remained the front-runner.

"They're still my No. 1 choice by far," he said. "But I feel like I owe it to the staff at Oregon to take a visit and see what they have to offer. They've been good with me and very gracious and all that good stuff. I feel like I owe them the opportunity to see what they have to offer.

"But Ohio State is still definitely my No. 1 choice, and it's still my dream to play for them."

### 10 Years Ago – 2010

It was officially an early two-horse race for Toledo Whitmer junior defensive end Chris Wormley.

The class of 2012 four-star prospect landed an offer from Michigan and told GoBlueWolverines.com that he was favoring the two teams on opposite sides of the greatest rivalry in college sports.

"It is Michigan and Ohio State at the top," he said. "I don't really have them one-two right now, but they are definitely at the top."

Rated one of the top 100 early prospects in the class, Wormley had an Ohio State offer in his back pocket for some time but added one from Michigan head coach Rich Rodriguez during an unofficial visit to Ann Arbor on Oct. 16.

### Five Years Ago – 2015

The soap opera that was Ohio State's running back recruiting wasn't going to be going off the air anytime soon.

After a decommitment from Hubbard, Ohio, four-star George Hill and the subsequent commitment of New London (N.C.) North Stanley four-star Antonio Williams, the Buckeyes still sat at three running back commitments with less than four months until signing day.

Williams was set to enroll early, and the commitment of North Ridgeville, Ohio, four-star Demario McCall was never in question. That left just Wayne (N.J.) DePaul Catholic five-star Kareem Walker as the lone running back commit whose status was still in question.

The talented back was the subject of increasing speculation after taking an official visit to Michigan on Oct. 10.

Walker's attempt at quelling the speculation regarding his recruitment came on Oct. 21, when he released a statement saying that he would take his full allotment of official visits but remained an Ohio State commit.

"I'm committed to Ohio State," he said. "I will take my remaining visits to Alabama, Mississippi, Arizona State and my last visit will be back to Ohio State. All of this talk about another running back committing and me not wanting any competition is false. I love competition."

### One Year Ago – 2019

On Oct. 13 – roughly a week and a half after he decommitted from Oklahoma – Little Elm, Texas, four-star cornerback Ryan Watts announced his commitment to Ohio State.

The 6-3, 187-pound Watts, who was considered the 19th-best cornerback and No. 258 prospect overall in the class of 2020, had been committed to the Sooners since April. However, Buckeye head coach Ryan Day and co-defensive coordinator/secondary coach Jeff Hafley had maintained contact with Watts in hopes of flipping him from his pledge.

Watts took a clandestine unofficial visit to Columbus in June, which showed the staff he was serious about his interest in Ohio State. His official visit for the 76-5 win over Miami (Ohio) on Sept. 21 only ramped up the speculation of a potential flip.

With programs such as Penn State and Texas A&M also pushing for an official visit, Watts reopened his recruitment on Oct. 2 and closed it right back up just over 10 days later.



## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

NBC will broadcast a two-hour special called "All-American Bowl: Declaration Day," which will celebrate the 100 players invited to play in this year's game and feature a number of live player commitments. It will be hosted by NBC Sports' Paul Burmeister and include analysis from former NFL quarterback Chris Simms, 247Sports director of scouting Barton Simmons and former Notre Dame wide receiver and 2013 U.S. Army All-American Bowl participant Corey Robinson.

Ohio State was set to send a nation-leading 12 players to this year's All-American Bowl, a number that would only grow if Leigh, Tuimolou or Steilacoom, Wash., five-star wide receiver Emeka Egbuka ultimately choose the Buckeyes. That list includes Sawyer; Henderson; McCord; Ballard; Hall; Pryor; Williams; Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal five-star offensive guard Donovan Jackson; St. Louis De Smet Jesuit four-star cornerback Jakailin Johnson; Suwanee (Ga.) North Gwinnett four-star cornerback Jordan Hancock; Ironton, Ohio, four-star linebacker Reid Carrico; and Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep four-star wide receiver Marvin Harrison.

### Notes From Around The Country

- Hancock made his season debut in North Gwinnett's 31-0 win over Mill Creek on Oct. 16. Hancock – who initially opted out of his senior year to limit potential interactions with others amid the coronavirus pandemic since both of his parents having underlying health issues – caught three passes for 34 yards and made two tackles on defense.

- Tyleik Williams announced on Oct. 22 that he plans to enroll in classes at Ohio State

in January. That gives the Buckeyes 12 early enrollees, including Sawyer; Henderson; McCord; Ballard; Carrico; Pryor; Harrison; Williams; Burke; Hart; Bowling Green (Ky.) South Warren four-star safety Jantzen Dunn; and Fremantle, Western Australia, three-star punter Jesse Mirco.

- Monroeville's Davis announced he'll make his college decision on Nov. 7 – a change from the reported date of Nov. 14. Davis, the second-best safety in the 2021 recruiting class, will choose among Georgia, Ohio State, Penn State, Pittsburgh and USC.

- Although coaches are unable to evaluate prospects in person due to the NCAA-mandated recruiting dead period, Ohio State handed out several new scholarship offers this month, including 2022 Cumming (Ga.) West Forsyth three-star tight end Oscar Delp on Oct. 10 and 2022 Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star offensive tackle Tyler Booker and Chandler, Ariz., three-star wide receiver Kyion Grayes on Oct. 20.

- Akron Hoban three-star safety A.J. Kirk, the younger brother of former Ohio State safety Mike Doss, committed to Michigan State on Oct. 13. He landed an offer from the Buckeyes following a one-day camp in June 2019, but the program stopped recruiting him last winter.

- Katy (Texas) Tompkins four-star defensive end Tunmise Adeleye, a former Ohio State commit, announced Alabama, Florida and Texas A&M as his final three schools on Oct. 14. He is considered the fifth-best strongside defensive end in the class of 2021.

*For the latest in Ohio State football recruiting news, be sure to check out BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB subscribers, daily.*



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# PSU's Chambers Resigns After Racist Remarks

Pat Chambers resigned Oct. 21 following an internal investigation by Penn State into allegations of inappropriate conduct by the head men's basketball coach.

Penn State released a statement regarding new allegations that surfaced after The Undefeated reported in July that former Nittany Lions guard Rasir Bolton said he decided to leave the team because Chambers made a reference to a noose around Bolton's neck.

## BIG TEN NOTES

### Joe Dempsey

Bolton, who transferred to Iowa State, said that he recalled Chambers saying, "I want to be a stress reliever for you. You can talk to me about anything. I need to get some of this pressure off you. I want to loosen the noose that's around your neck."

"The new allegations surfaced shortly after The Undefeated's article, and a review was conducted jointly by Penn State's Affirmative Action and Athletics Integrity offices," Penn State said in its statement.

Chambers said in a statement that he made the decision to take "a break to reset and chart our path forward."

Penn State athletic director Sandy Barbour said that accepting Chambers' resignation is "in the best interest of Penn State, our program and our student-athletes." Barbour said the athletic department received the results of the investigation within the past few weeks, adding that the new allegation was previously unknown to the school and was unrelated to the incident Bolton spoke up about.

Chambers had led the Nittany Lions men's basketball program since 2011, and they were poised for an NCAA Tournament appearance in 2019-20 before the COVID-19 pandemic led to the cancellation of the

NCAA Tournament. Penn State would have gone to its first NCAA Tournament since 2011 and fifth since 1965.

"I am so proud of all our program has accomplished these past nine years, and I will be forever grateful to the Penn State community for its ongoing support," Chambers said in his statement. "Anyone who has ever coached – especially at this level – knows the exceptional amount of energy and focus it takes to deliver each and every day. This has been an incredibly difficult year for me and my family, and we are in need of a break to reset and chart our path forward. So I'm taking a step back to prepare myself for the next 20 years."

After The Undefeated story was published July 6, Bolton explained his situation in a Twitter post, saying that Chambers never apologized for what he had said.

"He said he was from the North and wasn't aware," Bolton said in the tweet.

"A noose; symbolic of lynching, defined as one of the most powerful symbols directed at African Americans invoking the history of lynching, slavery and racial terrorism," Bolton said. "Due to other interactions with Coach, I knew this was no slip of the tongue."

Chambers issued a statement where he apologized to Bolton following the publication of The Undefeated's story.

"I've realized the pain my words and ignorance caused Rasir Bolton and his family, and I apologize to Rasir and the Bolton family for what I said," Chambers said. "I failed to comprehend the experiences of others, and the reference I made was hurtful, insensitive and unacceptable. I cannot apologize enough for what I said, and I will carry that forever."

Rasir's father, Ray, said he and his family want coaches to learn from what his son went through.

"I would hope that this is more of an anomaly," he said. "I would hope coaches see this and make this an anomaly. These athletes are more than assets. They're human beings."

Assistant coach Jim Ferry will serve as Penn State's interim head coach for the 2020-21 season. Barbour said Penn State will

conduct a national search before naming a new full-time head coach.

## Michigan Receiver No Longer With Team

Nico Collins, a standout wide receiver for Michigan, is no longer with the team, according to head coach Jim Harbaugh.

"Nico is not participating in football right now," Harbaugh said. "I don't have a crystal ball as to if his mind would change on that. I know he's not currently on the team."

After hauling in 37 receptions for 729 yards and seven touchdowns as a junior, Collins initially decided to return for his senior season. However, he reportedly opted out before the Big Ten announced its decision to reinstate the season.

Michigan offensive coordinator Josh Gattis expressed his support of Collins when asked about the former Wolverine standout on Sept. 23, without indicating whether he would return or not.

"We've had some conversations," Gattis said. "We've had a ton of conversation obviously. I'm very respectful of anyone's personal decisions, and I'm going to leave that to Nico to be able to make whenever he's comfortable making an announcement."

"We've done nothing but support him 100 percent. We support him the same way we support all our players here. I think eventually everyone will be hearing from him."

The Wolverines were already attempting to replace quarterback Shea Patterson, four starting offensive linemen, presumed starting receiver Tarik Black, who transferred to Texas, and another major wideout in Donovan Peoples-Jones, who was selected by the Browns in the sixth round of the 2020 NFL draft after forgoing his senior season.

Despite all the losses, Harbaugh praised the performance of his receivers during the irregular offseason, specifically mentioning Ronnie Bell, A.J. Henning, Giles Jackson, Cornelius Johnson, Mike Sainristil, and Roman Wilson.

"One of the really good things about our offense's growth has been the receiving group," Harbaugh said. "Their ability to get

## BIG 2020 Standings

East Division			
	W	L	Pct.
Indiana	1	0	1.000
Michigan	1	0	1.000
<b>Ohio State</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1.000</b>
Rutgers	1	0	1.000
Maryland	0	1	0.000
Michigan State	0	1	0.000
Penn State	0	1	0.000
West Division			
	W	L	Pct.
Northwestern	1	0	1.000
Purdue	1	0	1.000
Wisconsin	1	0	1.000
Illinois	0	1	0.000
Iowa	0	1	0.000
Minnesota	0	1	0.000
Nebraska	0	1	0.000

### Oct. 23 Score

Wisconsin 45, Illinois 7

### Oct. 24 Scores

**Ohio State 52, Nebraska 17**  
Rutgers 38, Michigan State 27  
Purdue 24, Iowa 20  
Indiana 36, Penn State 35 (OT)  
Northwestern 43, Maryland 3  
Michigan 49, Minnesota 24

### Oct. 30 Game

Minnesota at Maryland, 7:30 p.m.

### Oct. 31 Games

Michigan State at Michigan, Noon  
Purdue at Illinois, Noon  
Indiana at Rutgers, 3:30 p.m.  
Wisconsin at Nebraska, 3:30 p.m.  
Northwestern at Iowa, 3:30 p.m.  
Ohio State at Penn State, 7:30 p.m.

separation, to gain separation, create separation, and to catch the contested catches."

The No. 18-ranked Maize and Blue took on No. 21 Minnesota to start the season, winning 49-24.

## PSU RB Journey Brown Could Miss Season With Medical Issue

Journey Brown, Penn State's starting running back, could miss the 2020 season because of a medical condition discovered during the offseason.

Brown led the Nittany Lions last season with 890 rushing yards and 12 touchdowns on 129 carries, starting 10 games and averaging 6.9 yards per carry. He ranked third in the Big Ten in rushing touchdowns and fifth in rushing yards.

According to a statement from Penn State, Brown is receiving treatment for the undisclosed condition. Brown told reporters Oct. 1 that he had initially contemplated sitting out the season but wanted to play one final year before advancing to the NFL.

A fourth-year junior from Meadville, Pa., Brown set Penn State bowl records with 202 rushing yards and 12.6 yards per carry in the Nittany Lions' Cotton Bowl win against Memphis.

Penn State also lost former five-star prospect Ricky Slade as a transfer, so sophomores Noah Cain and Devyn Ford are expected to be relied upon heavily without Brown. Cain rushed for 443 yards and eight scores on 84 carries (5.3 average), while Ford added 294 yards and three touchdowns on 52 attempts (5.7 average).

The Nittany Lions also have a pair of four-star freshmen at running back in Cazia Holmes and Keyvone Lee. Holmes was rated the No. 5 all-purpose back and No. 188 over-

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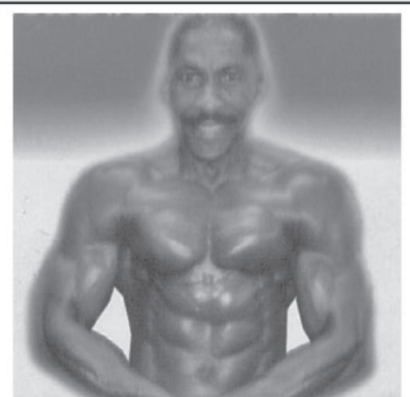
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## BIG TEN NOTES

all prospect in the country, while Lee was the No. 22 running back and No. 281 overall recruit in 2020.

### Purdue Head Coach Brohm Tests Positive For COVID-19

Purdue head football coach Jeff Brohm had a positive COVID-19 test, forcing him to quarantine for 10 days and miss the Boilermakers' season opener against Iowa. Brohm's brother, offensive coordinator Brian Brohm, served as acting head coach while also calling the plays in a 24-20 win against the Hawkeyes.

While Big Ten student-athletes must self-isolate for 21 days following a positive test, conference administrators and coaches agreed that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines were appropriate for coaches.

"Unfortunately, it got me," Jeff Brohm said. "Now I have to recuperate as fast as I can."

Purdue's head coach said he did not know how he became infected but that there was somebody in his family who also tested positive. He said he immediately self-isolated but recognized he had symptoms Oct. 17.

"For a few days before the positive test, I was abnormally tired and exhausted, and I just thought that I was tired from work," Brohm said. "I didn't really know for sure what was happening, but it really wasn't until Saturday that it started to kick in, and the cold chills, body aches, a little bit of sweating, the chest tightness – really all of the symptoms you hear about – took place, and I knew I was not in good shape then and probably would have a positive test the next day and did."

Since the team began daily antigen testing on Sept. 30, Purdue athletic director Mike Bobinski said no student-athletes have tested positive. He added that there have been zero false positives, and that any positive test has been confirmed with a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.

The SEC allows coaches who have three negative PCR tests, each 24 hours apart, to leave isolation and rejoin the team, but the Big Ten does not. Once Brohm clears CDC protocols of 10 days of quarantine and no longer tests positive for COVID, he can return to team activities.

"We're very confident in the system and the protocol and believe it will get us the right results," Bobinski said. "At the end of the day, we don't want to put anybody out there who's positive. Erring on the side of safety at this point is the right way to go."

### MSU Football Players Arrested In Fraternity House Incident

Michigan State football players Luke Fulton and Charles Willekes have been suspended indefinitely following their arrests following an incident at a fraternity house.

Fulton was charged with aggravated assault in an incident Sept. 8 in East Lansing, Mich., and posted a \$1,000 personal bond. Michigan State was in strength and conditioning training at that point following the postponement of the Big Ten season.

Although there is no recent online court record for Willekes, Steve Gonzales, deputy chief of the East Lansing Police Department, confirmed Willekes was arrested but his record is in a nonpublic status with 54B District Court.

Neither Fulton nor Willekes, who are both linebackers, have been participating in practices since the Spartans started back up Sept. 16.

"Luke Fulton and Charles Willekes were suspended from all team activities immediately and remain suspended from the program indefinitely," a Michigan State spokes-

man said.

East Lansing Police arrest logs show one report of "Aggravated/Felonious Assault – Non-Family – Strong Arm" from Sept. 16 involving two suspects that included forced entry into a residence at the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity house, which Gonzales confirmed was the location of the incident involving Fulton and Willekes.

Fulton, a 6-4, 225-pound redshirt freshman, pleaded not guilty in 54B District Court on Sept. 30, and the action was removed from the calendar Oct. 13. According to online court files, the Youngstown, Ohio, native is not permitted to travel out of state or have any direct or indirect contact with the alleged victim.

Fulton's attorney, Mike Nichols, said charges were reduced to assault and battery, and he is hopeful Fulton will be granted Holmes Youthful Trainee Act status. In Michigan, offenders younger than 24 who have pleaded to some criminal offenses can have their court records closed to public view under HYTA. Unless the trainee commits another offense, such records maintain nonpublic status, according to the law.

"While serious, it's not an uncommon kind of a situation for any college kid, let alone an athlete," Nichols said. "But ultimately, I think the judge will grant him Holmes Youthful Trainee Act status, which will allow him to keep his record clean, which is a big deal."

Sentencing for Fulton has been scheduled for Oct. 28, according to court documents. The Youngstown Cardinal Mooney product did not see the field in 2019, but he was the Spartans' scout-team special teams player of the week for the Rutgers game toward the end of the season.

Willekes, a 6-1, 225-pound walk-on redshirt freshman, is the brother of former Michigan State All-America defensive end Kenny Willekes. The younger Willekes, who hails from Rockford, Mich., played in one game last season on special teams against Michigan. He was the scout-team special teams player of the week from the Spartans' 2019 season opener against Tulsa.

### Top Performers Across The Conference

David Bell, Purdue's standout sophomore receiver, hauled in 13 of his 21 targets for 121 yards and three touchdowns. Bell was the Big Ten's top performer in the opening week. He stepped up in the absence of the injured Rondale Moore, scoring all three of the Boilermakers' touchdowns, including the game-winner in a 24-20 upset of Iowa.

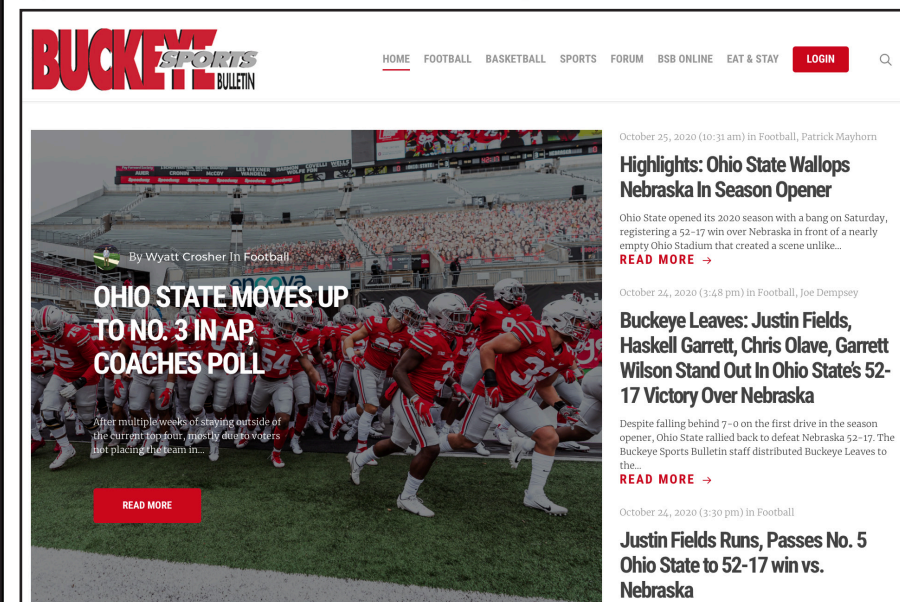
Despite falling to the Wolverines, Minnesota tailback Mohamed Ibrahim deserves credit for his performance in the 49-24 loss without two starting offensive linemen. The fourth-year junior rushed for 140 yards and two scores on 26 carries, adding four catches for 17 yards as a receiver.

Wisconsin redshirt freshman quarterback Graham Mertz shined in his debut as starter, completing his first 15 passes on his way to a 20-for-21 passing performance for 248 yards and five touchdowns in a 45-7 victory against Illinois.

Sean Clifford, Penn State's quarterback, displayed his dual-threat abilities in a 36-35 loss at Indiana. The fourth-year junior signal caller completed 24 of 35 passes for 238 yards and three touchdowns. The former Cincinnati St. Xavier standout also rushed for 119 yards and one score on 17 attempts.

Rutgers safety Brendon White recorded five tackles, including four solo stops, as well as an interception in his Scarlet Knight debut. The former Buckeye's pick helped Rutgers defeat Michigan State, 38-27.

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The screenshot shows the Buckeye Sports Bulletin website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for HOME, FOOTBALL, BASKETBALL, SPORTS, FORUM, BSB ONLINE, EAT & STAY, and a LOGIN button. Below the navigation bar is a large image of an Ohio State football game in progress. Overlaid on the image is a headline: "OHIO STATE MOVES UP TO NO. 3 IN AP COACHES POLL". Below the image, there is a "READ MORE" button. To the right of the image, there is a list of recent highlights with dates and times, including "Highlights: Ohio State Wallops Nebraska In Season Opener" and "Justin Fields Runs, Passes No. 5 Ohio State to 52-17 win vs. Nebraska".

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# Following COVID Protocols Essential For Season

The Ohio State men's basketball schedule is arriving in drips with only a season-opening tournament in South Dakota in November and four other December nonconference games announced, but at least how the 2020-21 season will be managed amid the COVID-19 pandemic has been detailed.

## COURT REPORT Craig Merz

The NCAA has a series of recommendations from the Sports Science Institute that is a step-by-step process to ensure the safety of all individuals involved in trying to stage an event beginning with home schools providing visiting teams and officials pertinent information about their playing facility 72 hours in advance of a scheduled game.

For example, notice should be given as to which doors to enter and exit the building, screenings requirements needed for entry, availability of locker room and/or meeting space, and restrictions on fan attendance.

It's a thorough document that covers everything from who should wear a face covering and what to do after a game (don't shake the opponents' hands and shower at the hotel).

Personnel are divided into three levels depending on what their roles are and where they need to be.

Only the first two tiers will be allowed in the bubble area of the locker rooms, athletic training rooms and court.

**Tier 1** – Individuals for whom face coverings and physical distancing are not effective or possible during competition. This includes players, coaches and staff, trainers, and medical personnel. Because it is assumed Tier 1 individuals have tested negative for COVID-19 it is suggested

they do not need physical distancing and masking while on the benches, but the benches should be separated from non-Tier 1 individuals.

**Tier 2** – People who come in close contact with Tier 1 individuals but can reasonably maintain physical distancing and use face coverings during interaction. Examples include athletic department staff, security and event staff, and league personnel. Masks should always be used, and all Tier 2 personnel must be approved by event organizers.

**Tier 3** – Those who provide event services but are not in the same vicinity as Tier 1 individuals and have minimal contact with Tier 2s (i.e. caterers, sanitation workers, media). They must always be masked and maintain physical distancing.

The recommendations note that any spectator admittance is dependent upon local and state health officials' guidelines.

Also, it is recommended that visiting band/cheer groups not travel and home band/cheer groups be treated as Tier 2 personnel.

For all tiers, face coverings should be worn for entry in and out of the facility.

### Make A Quick Exit

Other notable recommendations:

- The pregame meeting between game officials and table crew (statisticians, timekeeper, etc.) should be conducted virtually or in an area that allows six feet of separation.
- The pregame captains' meeting should be eliminated or modified.
- Eliminate ball persons who are not Tier 1 individuals and designate a member of the host school to clean the court and game balls.
- Water bottles and cups should be labeled for individual use. The same for towels. Players and coaches will be responsible for getting their own water and towels during timeouts.
- During timeouts movable chairs should be used, and after each break

## OSU Men's Basketball Verbal Commits

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
Malaki Branham	SG	6-4	175	★★★★	Akron (Ohio) St. Vincent-St. Mary
Kalen Etzler	PF	6-8	195	★★★★	Convoy (Ohio) Crestview
Meechie Johnson	PG	6-1	185	★★★★	Garfield Heights (Ohio)

Players in the class of 2022 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
Bowen Hardman	SG	6-3	160	★★★	Cincinnati Princeton

those chairs should be removed to a location and cleaned by team staff.

• If possible, seats in locker rooms should be at least six feet apart. Players and team personnel should wear masks in locker rooms and not remove them until reaching the court.

• Teams should have their own racks of basketballs for use for practice and pregame. Team personnel should clean them with dish soap and water, not a disinfectant.

• Three or four balls should be set aside for game use and should be replaced each time it goes out of bounds and touched by someone not in Tier 1 and 2. Game balls should be cleaned during media timeouts and half-time.

• The postgame handshake line should be eliminated, but some act of sportsmanship can be shown such as "the teams lining up at their respective free throw lines and giving congratulatory waves to each other."

• Teams are encouraged to leave the venue immediately after their game.

• Crowd noise can be piped in but must meet decibel level standards set by the NCAA.

There is a lot more but that gives an overview.

As the season prepares for the Nov. 25 tip-off, there are sure to be more regula-

tions and alterations to how the game is played and presented.

Ohio State opens that first night against Memphis and head coach Anfernee "Penny" Hardaway in the eight-team Bad Boy Mowers Crossover Classic at the Sanford Pentagon in Sioux Falls, S.D., which replaces the Buckeyes' previously planned trip to the Bahamas.

The Buckeyes are in the bracket with West Virginia and Texas A&M and will play one of them the following night. Depending on the outcomes, OSU could be playing on the final day of Nov. 27.

The Buckeyes host Morehead State on Dec. 2 and Alabama A&M on Dec. 5.

They will have a game somewhere against somebody for the ACC/Big 10 Challenge on Dec. 7 and play North Carolina Dec. 19 at a site to be determined in the CBS Sports Classic.

It is expected there may be up to four Big Ten games in December, double the usual number, to take advantage of the student population being home for the holidays.

### Wait A Minute

The previously mentioned protocols are for getting through the games themselves, but the reality is programs have and will struggle to play as scheduled if the coronavirus continues to wreak havoc on lives.

That was evident Oct. 21 when the Toledo men and the Marquette men's and women's teams were shut down for two weeks.

Toledo had six players test positive for COVID-19, three days after head coach Tod Kowalczyk had a positive result.

"The COVID-19 pandemic remains a serious challenge, and our primary focus will always be on ensuring our student-athletes' health," Toledo athletic director Mike O'Brien said in a statement. "We look forward to our men's basketball program resuming its team activities."

The school said it isolated those who tested positive and conducted contact tracing.

There was one positive test on each of the Marquette hoops teams. Players from the teams and all Tier 1 staff were required to quarantine. The two positives were out of 45 players and staff tested on Oct. 19.

By the way, Ohio State and the other Big Ten schools began daily COVID-19 testing on Oct. 26. The NCAA requires teams to be tested at least three times a week.



Penny Hardaway



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# Poole Brings Depths Of Talent To Buckeyes

Kateri Poole finished her high school career with a playoff victory, which in a normal year almost always would have meant Poole ended her senior season at Bronx (N.Y.) South Shore with a championship.

But 2020 is not a normal year, and following a March 11 victory against Summit Academy in which South Shore jumped out to a 23-5 first-quarter lead before cruising to a 60-42 win, the season was canceled before Poole had an opportunity to lead her team to a title.

## DOUBLE DRIBBLE Wyatt Crosher

"We were going to the championship game, literally the day that we played our semifinal game, the championship game was that Saturday and they canceled it because of COVID," Poole told Buckeye Sports Bulletin over the phone on Oct. 22. "I was pretty much heartbroken because, you know every senior wants to go out with a bang, but I was pretty content with what I accomplished thus far."

Poole spent only one year at South Shore, a team that had won back-to-back New York City championships in both boys and girls basketball in 2018-19, the first school in the Public Schools Athletic League to accomplish that feat.

The five-star guard had spent her first three high school seasons at Monsignor Scanlan, a team she led to a second-place finish in the state tournament in what would be her last year with the team.

In a local news interview with News12, Poole said back in September of last year that she transferred to South Shore in an attempt to earn a title. She also said the transfer of another major prospect from Monsignor Scanlan, forward Kayla Morris, who is now at East Carolina, to Montverde Academy in Orlando, Fla., helped push Poole to make the move over to South Shore.

Poole told BSB another reason for the transfer was for her to switch over to a more intense coach in order to prepare for the college level.

"I just wanted a coach that was going to push me for my senior year going into college the next year," Poole said. "I'm not saying that the coach that I had prior didn't, but it was kind of very much lackadaisical, and I just wanted a coach that was going to be hard on me just like (Ohio State head coach Kevin) McGuff is."

Her lone season with the Vikings went well, with Poole averaging 18 points, six rebounds and five assists in her senior campaign. She was also impressive enough to win the Miss New York Basketball honor as the top player in the state, an honor for which Ohio State men's basketball commit Zed Key was a finalist.

But before earning that major honor, Poole had already committed to Ohio State back on July 26, 2019, a decision that McGuff and Poole said came after years of recruiting.

"We saw her at a young age, and how we play, we play a really fast, up-tempo style of play and she's somebody that we saw from a young age can really play fast and really make plays going at a high rate of speed," McGuff told BSB. "She's got a lot of talent and a lot of potential, and I think she can really be special here."

Poole said that Ohio State was highly active during her recruitment and that her visits and communication with the program made it feel like the place she wanted to continue her career.

"They were recruiting me for about two or three years," Poole said. "McGuff and the other staff that was here before, they were very vocal with me, my parents, always showed a lot of love when I had games in AAU. My teammates now, they reached out. We had a pretty good relationship, and on my visit, it just felt like home."

One of those teammates who reached out was junior forward Aaliyah Patty, who was with Poole on her visit to Ohio State.

"Aaliyah was great," Poole said. "She showed me around campus a lot, she took me under her wing and to this day she takes me under her wing. That's my big sis. She's my role model."

Patty said she kept in contact with Poole after the visit and saw her often through social media, and that she is expecting big things from the freshman point guard.

"She creates a lot, off the dribble, off screens, handling the ball she's very strong," Patty told BSB. "I think she can be a very big part of our team. She is a leader when it comes to being a point guard. She controls the court, she controls what everyone does, and she makes everyone better around her. She can make an impact right away. I already see it in practice, so I think she can be very important to us when it comes to games and just later on in the season."

McGuff said much the same when it comes to what he believes makes Poole a special talent. Ohio State's head coach liked a lot of what she brings to the table as the seventh-best point guard and No. 24 overall prospect in the 2020 class, but specifically he liked her ability to play fast while avoiding turning it over.

"Not a lot of kids can play fast and still be under control," McGuff said. "Like people kind of play fast but you see a lot of turnovers and kind of out of control, but she was just zipping up and down the court. She was in control and she had a good knack of when to shoot it and score and when to get her teammates involved, and that's really what I noticed from

## OSU Women's Basketball Verbal Commits

Players in the class of 2021 who have issued verbal commitments to play basketball at Ohio State. (Star ratings are from the ESPN rankings.)

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Stars	High School
Kaitlyn Costner	PG	5-8	N/A	Mishawaka (Ind.) Penn
Taylor Thierry	SG	5-10	N/A	Willoughby (Ohio) Laurel

a very early age."

Poole is one of many guards on Ohio State's roster, and one of three who were recruited as true point guards along with sophomore Madison Greene and redshirt freshman Rikki Harris, who was also a five-star but sat out last season due to injury.

Greene is likely to reprise her role as the starting point guard, but the backup spot is up for grabs, and Poole said she is expecting to be able to make an immediate impact for the team in 2020.

"I'm pretty sure they didn't recruit me just for me to be content with who I am," Poole said. "I'm looking forward to making an impact in the Big Ten overall and during the season, so we'll see what happens."

Poole brings with her the typical expectations for what a five-star talent can do, and she is joining a young team that has depth but also has room for her to immediately make a difference.

After being robbed of her high school championship game and Ohio State being robbed of its opportunity in the NCAA Tournament, both Poole and the rest of the Buckeyes are trying to make up for the missed opportunity. When asked what her goals for the team this season were, Poole did not hesitate.

"We're going to get a championship," Poole said.

## Ohio State Hits 100 Percent On Voter Registration

McGuff announced on Twitter on Oct. 16 that the women's basketball team was 100 percent registered to vote, and he told BSB that it was an important topic of conversation with this group during an election year.

"Really our whole team is just interested and just the civil unrest that's developed

around the country and the Black Lives Matter movement, I think a part of that is we just wanted to make sure we helped our kids get registered so that they could make their vote count and make their voices be heard," McGuff said.

Patty said that this was an important topic for her specifically, and she is glad that the team was able to come together to all register.

"I think that it's very important. Even just as a team we talk about things that happen throughout the world, and we just know that it's very important to get out there and vote," Patty said. "We wanted to make sure that as a team we all got that accomplished. But I think that it's something that we emphasize on a lot here, and I just think that it's very important that everyone goes out to vote."

## Women And Men Get Uniform Change

On Oct. 16, Ohio State released the newest uniforms for both the men's and women's basketball teams, both of which will be wearing the same new style for the first time in program history.

The new uniforms feature the classic "Ohio State" font on the chest and the scarlet and gray striping down the side, along with a buckeye leaf on the belt of the shorts.

"They're fire. They're real tough, I like them," Patty said. "I'm excited to play in them this year. They're really nice."

McGuff, while admitting that this was not his area of expertise, also had some positive comments on the new look.

"They look good," he said. "The kids are really excited. They love that stuff. I'm glad that we get the chance to wear some of the best uniforms in the country, but I'm probably not the best judge on that fashion type stuff. But they look good to me."

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# Expanded State Playoff Draws Mixed Reviews

By PATRICK MAYHORN  
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

The Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) football playoffs look quite a bit different in 2020. With only six regular-season games on the table for teams around the state because of COVID-19 protocols set forth by the OHSAA and Gov. Mike DeWine, the organization made the decision to expand its playoff from the usual 224-team, 28-region setup, allowing every healthy team the opportunity to play in at least one playoff game this fall.

That change brought with it a massive influx of teams and playoff matchups, jumping all the way up to 664 participating teams in the 2020 edition of the playoffs.

To accommodate those numbers, the OHSAA tacked on first-round byes for top seeds in most regions. Seeding was voted on by the coaches of the region, and the number of teams allowed in each region was only determined by which schools were healthy enough and willing to participate.

At the top of the sport, in the four Division I regions, that increase was relatively minor, increasing from the usual eight-team bracket to 16 in each region, adding one extra game for the top eight seeds while bringing eight new teams into the fold that wouldn't have usually been included.

At the lower levels the playoff has tripled in size, averaging out to about 24 teams per region but hitting as many as 27 in Division III, Region 9, which gave its top five seeds the first round off.

Many of the regions have seen the top eight seeds advance to the regional quarterfinals, creating a bracket identical to those of the year's past, but others have seen massive upsets shake up the fabric of the region.

In Division II, Region 6, North Royalton entered as a winless No. 22 seed before rattling off back-to-back overtime wins to advance into the final eight in its region.

It had its season ended by the No. 3 seed, Avon Lake, but that did little to put a damper on the experience for North Royalton athletic director Bo Kuntz.

"We love it," Kuntz told BSB. "Even going in 0-6, our people, our coaches and everybody thought that our league prepared us (really well). So I think we knew going in that we could be successful against the Southwest conference, but I didn't think we would compete. I didn't think we'd come out on top, but obviously we did."

The opportunity to play in the playoff was a significant one for the Bears, who had much of their season impacted by health issues that sidelined a significant portion of their roster.

This still may not have been a playoff team if fully healthy in a normal season, but Kuntz didn't feel that an 0-6 record was representative of the team, and the playoff berth provided a chance to prove that.

"We got healthy, that's the big thing," Kuntz said. "We had like 22 kids out at one point, and we are healthy now, our running backs are back, a lot of our linemen that were out are back. So we are healthy and that's the big thing."

Even beyond this COVID-impacted season, he'd like to see the expansion take hold indefinitely in Ohio, so long as eliminated teams don't have the length of their regular season shortened.

"I would, if they continue with the, 'you get knocked out, you continue to play' in either independent games or the rest of your schedule," Kuntz said when asked if he would like a full expansion moving forward. "Now, if they say, 'Once you get knocked out, you're done,' then I would not be for it."

While North Royalton's experience has not been a common one in the expanded playoff, the positive feelings about expansion are not exclusive to the Cinderella-story programs.

At Bellbrook, a Division III stalwart that claimed the top seed in Region 12, athletic director Charlie O'Dell is similarly interested in the expanded playoff, even though it only served to provide one more obstacle for his program to go through on its way to the regional quarterfinals, where it would have been anyway in a usual season. However, he has some concerns about potentially lopsided matchups.

"It's hard to second-guess anything during the pandemic, because everybody's making it up as they go along and doing the best they can," O'Dell told BSB. "So it's hard to second-guess. Now, whether it's the right move long-term? I don't even know that. I mean, you look at

some of the scores, and we're probably a good example, that the teams we've played so far wouldn't have been in the playoffs otherwise. And our scores have been really lopsided. Does that mean that those teams shouldn't be in the playoffs next year or in the future? I don't know.

"As somebody that's personally coached at schools that have had struggling football programs, I can tell you, we would have been pretty excited to get in. I remember, heck, we went 8-2 last year and didn't get in, and we would have been thrilled to get in. So maybe it is the right move. I don't know. I'm glad it's not my decision."

It hasn't served as a benefit to Bellbrook this season, but O'Dell thinks that the opportunity for more teams to participate in the most exciting part of a season is a net positive for the sport and for players getting a chance to play in big-time football games.

"It probably would be nice to have everybody in every year, just because it is really exciting for the community," O'Dell said. "At the same time, maybe some of the novelty wears off. But I think I would like to see all the kids get this experience to have a playoff game. You just also hate that some of these teams that are not having great years, their season's going to end with a lopsided loss, typically."

Elsewhere, feelings about the expansion are a bit less positive. For teams that expect to make the playoff, like Massillon Washington, the expanded playoff is hard to question for this season but would serve as little more than a nuisance moving forward.

On top of that, Massillon athletic director Nate Moore is concerned that allowing every team into the playoff would devalue the regular season, which he considers to be the best part of the football schedule.

"I don't know that everybody making the playoffs is a good thing," Moore said. "I don't know that everybody getting to the playoffs is a bad thing, either. I think the ability to make the playoffs and the ability to opt out may be a decent compromise to that. But it does feel like we're taking something away from it being a special thing to make the playoffs. I don't know if that's a good thing or not."

"I mean, it would definitely devalue the regular season. That's one of the things that makes football special at all levels. For us, on a typical year, you only have 10 games. You're only guaranteed 10 games. All the work that you put in the entire offseason - for a senior in high school, I mean, most of your life is preparing for 10 evenings in the fall, so it makes it hugely important. Everybody making the playoffs kind of turns it into a 10-game series of

scrimmages."

Even in cases less extreme than Washington, a perennial top seed and title contender at one of the highest levels of the sport, athletic directors around the state have similar grievances about the potential of a devalued regular season. At Lucas High School, which played up two divisions and still managed a 5-1 regular season, athletic director Taylor Iceman prefers the playoffs as a reward for top teams, rather than an assumed fate for all competitors.

"For this year it's fine with the shortened season, and it's cool for everybody to get to experience it," Iceman said. "But with us it's a special thing to make the playoffs. Obviously, there are those cases every year where you get the team that goes 10-0 and doesn't make it in. Obviously, your heart goes out to them and you feel for situations like that. I think the 12-team expansion that they're going to go to next year will help that situation."

"But we're fortunate that we've been in and got to experience the playoffs. I think it's really cool for teams that are just getting a taste of it. But I like the aspect of 'you've got to earn your way in' because like I said, playoff football, it's something special in Ohio. So again, it's cool for this year, but I'm a believer in you earn your way in and you get to it."

Still, Iceman sees the appeal of getting more teams into the playoffs and doesn't think that expansion would be the worst fate to befall Ohio high school football.

"But again, there are other teams out there that can definitely make their case for why they maybe didn't get in," he said. "There are just so many different scenarios. But we enjoy the way that it has been, and like I said, I think next year that will be good with the 12 teams and the top four getting a bye. That's something we'll look forward to. It's just a special thing to make the playoffs, and it's something that not everybody gets to do. When you get to make it and you get to experience it, it's something special."

Ultimately, the near future of the playoffs will be a bit of a compromise between full expansion and the more conservative eight-team model that has been the norm for years, to which Iceman alluded. The OHSAA announced on May 20 that its board of directors had voted unanimously, 9-0, in favor of expanding the playoff from eight teams per region to 12 starting in 2021, as recommended by the Ohio High School Football Coaches Association.

Under that new system, the top four seeds will be given a first-round bye as many have in the COVID-expanded playoff system, with the remaining eight teams squaring off to whittle the field down to eight finalists. The specifics are still being ironed out, but the playoff will expand in 2021, even if it isn't quite as extreme as the move in 2020.

"We still have details to work out regarding the format and specific season dates, but this vote by the board gives us the green light to finalize those details for 2021," said Beau Rugg, senior director of officiating and sport management for the OHSAA and the association's football administrator, back in May. "We are thankful for the board's support on this proposal, which will bring all the great things of playoff football to 112 additional schools and communities."



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# Unusual Atmosphere Doesn't Deter Buckeyes

Driving into campus on Saturday for the Ohio State opener against Nebraska was like no other I have ever experienced. The traffic was unusually light, there was no tailgating taking place in the various parking lots or yards along the way, no street vendors and no fans shouting O-H-I-O. The closest thing to normalcy was a line of about 10 people waiting to get in the Varsity Club on Lane Avenue.

## COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

It was an eerie feeling when I parked my car and walked to my pregame broadcast location on the seventh floor of The Point on Lane. Campus was more like a ghost town than the typical hustle and bustle of game day in Columbus, Ohio. But there is no normal in the days of COVID, and even though I expected things to be different, seeing it for the first time just hours before kickoff made for a sad and disappointing Saturday morning.

My thoughts then went to the players and how different it would be for them in Ohio Stadium for the opener and how the new freshmen would have to wait for the "true" gameday experiences. Things like the team walk to St. John Arena from the Blackwell, the march into the stadium through a tunnel of cheering Buckeye fans, and the walk across the field to the locker room beneath the southeast tower.

As a former player and coach, I have been very fortunate to have experienced many of those pregame traditions, and I was sad for the young men who were going to suit up shortly to play their season opener, with something missing. They would have to wait to play in a packed stadium, hear the marching band play "Hang on Sloopy" between the third and fourth quarters and experience the deafening sound of the Buckeye faithful going absolutely wild when the team scored its first touchdown of the 2020 season. Those days will return to Columbus, to the Ohio State University campus and to the world of college football, and that day cannot come soon enough.

### First Test

The Buckeyes would have to face a team which was a lot like itself in terms of a storied tradition in Nebraska, two football programs that have won over 900 games in their gridiron history. Ohio State was a huge favorite due to the number of experienced players returning and due, also, to the success the program has had in recent years. At the same time, the Buckeyes knew the Cornhuskers would be a physical football team with enough weapons to beat them if given the opportunity.

Ohio State, even with its impressive number of returning starters, had to play at a high caliber and not make key mistakes in a game of this importance. There would be no home-team advantage in this contest, Nebraska would not have to worry about a hostile environment or on-the-field communication issues due to crowd noise – just play football. For Ohio State, the Buckeyes couldn't make key offensive mistakes like turnovers on their side of the 50 or give up big plays on defense. There are more upsets

in opening games than any other time of the season, and the Buckeyes had to bring their very best Oct. 24 to avoid the same fate as Penn State and Michigan State experienced in their openers.

It was on the field of battle where the first moment of normalcy occurred. As expected, the first quarter and a half was a back-and-forth slugfest between the two teams. Nebraska scored on its first drive, as did the Buckeyes. Ohio State would take its first lead on its next offensive possession, but Nebraska would answer with a Dedrick Mills touchdown early in the second quarter. It was at that point that reality set in and the Buckeyes took control of the game.

Nebraska would score only three more points the rest of the day compared to an Ohio State offense that never looked back and never slowed down on its way to a 52-17 victory. There was no singing of "Carmen Ohio" in front of the Ohio State marching band at the end of the game, and postgame interviews were limited with necessary safety protocols. Players didn't leave to meet their parents outside the locker room afterward in celebration but, instead, took the short ride back to the Woody Hayes complex on a caravan of buses. For its first test of the season the team scored an A on the field. For the classy way they have handled things off the field, they scored an A-plus.

### Field(s) Day

In these unusual times, Justin Fields was his normal self, spectacular! The Heisman candidate did not miss a beat from where he left off last season. As a matter of fact, he had one of his best days as a Buckeye, completing 20 of 21 passes without throwing an interception. If you take away negative yards on quarterback sacks, he would have been the leading rusher for the Buckeyes. Fields' first game heroics accounted for 330 of the team's 498 total yards.

His leadership vocally and by performance makes it easy to understand why he is a captain of this football team. He doesn't want to talk about the Heisman, and that's good, but in reality, it could very well be a two-horse race this year between him and Trevor Lawrence.

The passing attack of the Buckeyes was impressive not only in terms of yardage gained but in the number of different Buckeyes who hauled in the rock. Led by Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave's 13 combined receptions, eight different Buckeyes caught passes. Included in that group were freshman receivers Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Julian Fleming, as well as Oklahoma transfer running back Trey Sermon. Smith-Njigba made the instant highlight reel with his acrobatic touchdown reception at the back of the end zone. The body control he displayed by getting his foot down just inside the line is something rarely seen by a seasoned veteran, much less a true freshman.

### Running-Game Questions

It was apparent that the guy most missed from last year's team offensively was J.K. Dobbins. He was an instinctive back who read his blocks and made his cuts without hesitation.

Even though Sermon and Master Teague both had solid performances, it's apparent the true starting job is still up for grabs. Steele Chambers, deservedly, worked his way into the discussion having four carries and averaging 8.0 yards per carry. The only

player who carried the football with the acceleration, balance, and elusiveness needed to stand out above the rest was Fields. Hopefully, the Buckeye running game will steadily improve to the point Justin doesn't have to have that many carries and take as many hits as he did Saturday.

It was a blue-collar day up front in terms of run blocking. The Buckeye line got more push at the line of scrimmage as the game went on. The Cornhusker defensive front played with grit and determination, but the strength, precision and experience of Ohio State won out.

### Defensive Analysis

In a lot of ways, as Buckeye fans we have been spoiled with the play of some of the most talented defensive ends in Ohio State football history. Players like the Bosa brothers and Chase Young usually come along once in a lifetime. We have experienced their exceptionalism back-to-back-to-back in less than a decade. The Buckeyes don't have that type of dominating player on the defensive front as yet.

What they do have are a bunch of hard-working, great effort, team-first driven athletes who strive each day to improve their skills, and they came to play against the Cornhuskers.

Nebraska rushed for 217 yards with 66 of those coming on the first drive of the game. Mills was held to 33 net yards with most of the rest of the Cornhusker rushing attack coming from quarterback Adrian Martinez and quarterback/running back

Luke McCaffrey.

For the day, the stingy Buckeye defense held the Nebraska offense to under 400 total yards, about 40 yards less than their 2019 season average. The vast majority of tackles in the run game were made by the Ohio State front seven, led by the three starting linebackers Tuf Borland, Baron Browning and Pete Werner.

As good as the run defense was for Ohio State, the defensive pass effort was just as impressive. Shaun Wade and company didn't give up a pass play of more than 26 yards for the day. The Buckeye secondary was solid on both coverage and run support as well as recording the first defensive score of the year when Sevyn Banks scooped up a Nebraska fumble and took it 55-yards for a touchdown.

### Gutsy Garrett

We didn't expect No. 92 to see the field of play Saturday and didn't know if he was even going to dress for the game. I am sure Nebraska wishes he hadn't.

Not only did he show up, he was the most active man on the defensive front. He used his hands in shedding blockers, drove offensive linemen into the backfield, gave great pursuit to the football, and even recorded a quarterback sack.

After suffering from a gunshot wound to the face which put his life in danger and football career in jeopardy, Haskell Garrett proved he is indeed a special person, on and off the football field. The spirit of Ohio State football lives in Garrett.

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# Buckeyes Show Flaws In Beatdown Of Nebraska

Perhaps the best way to appreciate the play of Justin Fields is to first note his one "failure" – the one incomplete pass.

Fields was perfect on the play, nailing a leaping Chris Olave for a would-be 43-yard touchdown pass with two minutes to go in the first half. Olave was hit hard while still in the air and dropped the ball on the way down.

There were a couple of other incompletions that were nullified by penalty. But otherwise, Fields completed 20 of 20 passes for 276 yards and two touchdowns, officially going down in the record book as 20 of 21 overall if you include Olave's drop.

## EXNER POINT Rich Exner

Fields was so accurate and so perfect in his decision making that none of 20 completed passes were even close to falling incomplete. He was as perfect a passer as ever seen on the field of Ohio Stadium.

And as a runner, not too shabby either, gaining 75 yards on the ground. His net, including losses from three sacks, was 54 yards on 15 carries.

It's tough to draw conclusions from an opening game. But this one seems fairly certain. As good as Fields was last year, finishing third in the Heisman voting, he is better now.

Fast as ever, Fields now looks stronger, more accurate and more in control of the offense. What a ride it's going to be if he stays healthy.

### Lethal Receiver Combo

Among the other quick takeaways, we witnessed how potent Ohio State is at wide receiver, probably the best position grouping on the team and one this season that might just be in the discussion as the best receiving group in the nation.

Olave, a junior and the veteran of the bunch, looks better. Sharp routes. Fast. Mr. Smooth at the position. His 12 TD receptions last year ranks fourth at Ohio State for a season (behind Terry Glenn and two David Boston seasons). His 849 receiving yards last year was 19th best in OSU history. Expect him to do better this year on a per-game basis in the shortened season. He caught six passes for 104 yards in the opener.

Garrett Wilson came to Ohio State from Texas last year with much acclaim as a five-star recruit. His time was limited as a freshman because there were so many veteran receivers. But he showed his athletic ability. Now in the spotlight, he really does look like the superstar who was expected, starting off with seven catches for 129 yards and a TD.

The catch that was making all the highlight shows was that of freshman Jaxon Smith-Njigba, who stretched to keep a foot inside the line while the rest of his body was out of the end zone for his first college TD. With 34 TDs and more than 2,000 yards receiving as a high school senior, he was the Texas 6A (big school) player of the year and a top-50 recruit.

But Smith-Njigba wasn't even the top WR recruit making his debut for the Buckeyes. That was Julian Fleming, ranked the nation's top overall player by ESPN.com and third by 247 Sports. Fleming in the opener caught one pass for 13 yards. Expect soon to get a better look at his talents, maybe this week at Penn State, about 90 miles west of where he played his high school football.

### Lack Of Running Game

We did not learn from the opener who will be the featured running back this season, or if there will be one or a combo. The running game was lackluster.

Master Teague got the most carries (12 for 41 yards) but didn't look like the breakaway threat OSU fans have become accustomed to seeing. He looked more like a short-yardage back and, for the most part, picked up just short yardage, averaging 3.4 yards a carry.

ing 3.4 yards a carry.

Oklahoma transfer Trey Sermon also did not flash excellence, though overall, he did better than Teague, picking up 55 yards on 11 carries for a 5.0 average.

The burst came from Steele Chambers in his limited opportunities. A 17-yard run helped him to 32 yards on four carries. He's the guy I had been wondering why we were not hearing more about in the lead-up to the season. Chambers showed those same bursts last season, averaging 7.1 yards on his 19 carries for 135 yards. He played in just four games, redshirting a year ago.

What we did learn about the running game is that it needs work, especially in short-yardage situations.

\* Third-and-3 early in the second quarter, Teague was stopped for a gain of 2 yards.

\* Third-and-1 midway through the second quarter, Sermon was stopped for no gain.

\* Third-and-1 later in the same drive, again Sermon was stopped for no gain.

Most of the run production came from Fields, not a good thing when you're trying to keep your team leader and Heisman candidate healthy for a season with no scheduled off weeks.

### Defensive Woes

The bigger questions, however, involve the defense. Yes, Nebraska was held to 17 points. But the play of the OSU defense for the most part was uninspiring, especially against the run, where Nebraska nearly matched OSU's ground total (217 yards to 222) with 12 fewer attempts (36 to 48).

Nebraska started the game with touchdown drives of 75 and 78 yards in its first four possessions and advanced 72 yards for a field goal midway through the third quarter. Yes, Nebraska was held to just three points in the final 38:24 of the game, but the defense is in need of some work.

Perhaps Nebraska is better this year. The next few weeks will provide a clue. A year ago, Nebraska went 5-7, ranked 72nd nationally for points per game and

55th in total yards.

However, impressive for Ohio State was senior Haskell Garrett in the middle of the defensive line. He had just two tackles but was a factor in more plays. On one noteworthy sequence, he sacked Adrian Martinez and on the next play flushed him out of his lane for another loss, with Josh Proctor getting the tackle.

A lot of people probably recall that Garrett just eight weeks earlier was shot in the face while allegedly attempting to break up an argument near campus between a man and a woman. Fewer people may realize that he entered this season as the highest graded returning defensive tackle in the Big Ten, according to Pro Football Focus College.

### Hold Your Complaints

With expectations so high, it could be easy for fans to become frustrated about OSU's shortcomings at first glance, especially with the game tied, 14-14, midway through the second quarter.

But two reminders were served by day's end.

Ohio State ended up winning, 52-17. Anyone seeing that score pop up on a ticker would be impressed.

And, more importantly, Penn State lost to Indiana. Penn State, ranked eighth in the nation, went home a loser on opening day. In that context, a 52-17 win looks pretty good.

### Add Students To Stands

Mark me down as a cautious person when it comes to coronavirus. But why not allow Ohio State students to attend games? They're going to classes. They're living in tight quarters in dorms. And they're probably watching the games with friends.

There are 100,000-plus seats in the stadium. Surely 20,000 or so students could spread out safely. They could walk to the game. They are not tailgaters arriving in RVs hours ahead of time. They even could be assigned entry times to avoid clusters at the gates.

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# Buckeyes Start Opener Slow But Finish Fast

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

After Ohio State defeated Nebraska, one of the posters on our BuckeyeSports.com Forum suggested he had seen better openers from the Buckeyes. Another poster responded with a bit of sarcasm.

“Yeah, 52-17 is terrible.”

Both were right. Those posts came from our live game thread, and there was certainly much hand-wringing in the first half among staff members and readers about the Buckeye rushing attack and the defense, which was just ripped apart in the early going.

The good news is that Ohio State improved in both areas as the game progressed. The better news is that, as the poster stated, the Buckeyes won 52-17.

“The No. 1 goal is to go 1-0, and I think that’s the tricky thing here at Ohio State. It doesn’t matter how you win, it’s just a matter if you win,” Buckeye coach Ryan Day said. “And the best thing we can do is apologize for how we win, and to beat a Big Ten team like Nebraska 52-17, I mean that’s a pretty impressive day just to beat them by one.”

The two-headed rushing monster of Master Teague and Trey Sermon rushed for a combined 14 yards on seven carries in the first quarter and 44 yards on 14 tries for the half, good for just a 3.1-yard average. In the second half they combined for 52 yards on nine carries for an improved 5.8-yard average, and Steele Chambers added 32 yards on four carries to give the Buckeyes a more respectable 222 yards on 48 carries for the game, a hardly sparkling but hardly embarrassing performance on the ground.

Of course, those stats were padded by the 54 net yards quarterback Justin Fields gained, 46 of which came in the first half when he was Ohio State’s only effective runner. That Fields has tremendous ability with his feet is a positive. But without a proven backup quarterback, you can’t have your franchise signal-caller exposing himself on the ground 12 times a game. In fact, I am a little surprised Day didn’t take Fields out earlier, with the Buckeyes leading 45-17 midway through the fourth quarter.

Not only did Fields look like he didn’t need any more work, not only did you not want to risk injury, but the reserves need the game experience in case something does happen to Fields.

Fields certainly didn’t disappoint in his first 2020 outing.

He was 20 of 21 through the air for 276 yards and two scores. His lone miss was catchable but for solid contact by Nebraska defenders on Chris Olave, preventing him from having a day for the ages with a perfect mark on 21 passes.

To have a passing line like that of Fields you need help, and the Buckeyes showed what had been expected all along – that they are loaded at receiver. Olave didn’t disappoint with his six catches for 104 yards, and Garrett Wilson stepped up from a reserve noted for his circus catches last season to starter and possession receiver. Of his seven catches, five went for first downs and a sixth went for a 42-yard touchdown to give the Buckeyes their first lead of the game, 14-7, at the 4:02 mark of the first quarter.

On this afternoon, the circus catch was left to Jaxon Smith-Njigba, who made his mark with a toe-tapping touchdown catch at the back of the end zone in the fourth quarter. Another highly touted freshman, Julian Fleming, also had a catch in his first game, good for 13 yards.

Despite losing solid veteran receivers K.J. Hill, Binjimen Victor and Austin Mack to graduation, Brian Hartline’s group appears ready to not miss a beat.

For those of you keeping track of tight end production, Jeremy Ruckert and Luke Farrell

combined for two catches and 11 yards. Will this be the year?

While the rushing game got stronger as the game went on and the offense gained 498 yards on a fairly balanced 276 yards passing and 222 yards rushing, the defense, as mentioned, offered reason for consternation.

The stop troops quickly garnered attention, and not of the positive variety, when the Huskers marched 75 yards on four plays during the game’s opening drive, including a 47-yard run by Luke McCaffrey, the likes of which Buckeye fans – and coaches – were generally not used to seeing last season. The shortest plays of the four on the drive were each for 9 yards.

While the defense held Nebraska to just three points in the second half, the Cornhuskers gained more yardage in the final 30 minutes, 196-181. Upcoming opponents will be sure to notice that quarterbacks McCaffrey and Adrian Martinez were especially effective on the ground, combining for 164 yards on 21 carries (7.8-yard average) despite three sacks. The 377 total yards the Buckeyes gave up came in comparison to the 259.7 the defense yielded on average last season and the 231 Martinez and Co. gained in a 48-7 loss to Ohio State in Lincoln last season.

There is certainly no guarantee that the Buckeyes will repeat the outstanding defensive performance that they posted last season. Several key players are gone, especially in the secondary, not to mention Chase Young on the line. And Jeff Hafley, one of the architects of that defense, has taken his talents to the head coaching job at Boston College. Kerry Coombs is one of the most popular and successful assistant coaches for Ohio State in recent times, but he has huge shoes to fill in his second stint with the Buckeyes.

I found it interesting, encouraging and heartwarming that the defensive play of the Buckeyes seemed to turn on the play of a guy who was lucky to even be on the field.

With Ohio State holding a narrow 17-14 lead late in the second quarter, the defensive line seemed to come to life, sparked by Haskell Garrett, who just a short time ago had been shot in the face while reportedly breaking up an altercation near campus. Garrett was credited with a sack in the sequence but was much more involved than that as the Huskers moved backward 15 yards on a three-play drive.

The Buckeyes got the ball back on the Nebraska 46 with 2:25 left and scored on a Teague run to make it 24-14. They then opened the second half with Fields’ touchdown run to make it 31-14, and it was never really a game after that.

I think one reason the Buckeyes, thought by many to be primed for a title run, seemed so sluggish to us is that we may have become accustomed to Ohio State playing openers against lesser opponents. Nebraska clearly came ready to play, as evidenced by their quick start and the hard-hitting – by both teams really – throughout the game.

Ohio State opened with a Big Ten opponent as recently as 2017 and wasn’t particularly dominant in that one either, trailing Indiana at the half, 14-13, before rallying for a 49-21 victory. That was the game in which J.K. Dobbins kicked off his career with a 181-yard rushing performance.

In case you are wondering, the last time

Ohio State opened with a ranked opponent was 2003 when the Buckeyes hosted No. 17 Washington and defeated the Huskies, 28-9.

Ohio State’s next opponent would presumably be a step up in class as the Buckeyes travel to Penn State. The fact that the Lions suffered a stunning defeat at the hands of Indiana might just make them even more dangerous.

Keep your eye on OSU’s running game and defense.

### Positive Stats

When you consider that the game with Nebraska was an opener against a hard-hitting, quality opponent and the Buckeyes had limited spring practice and a lengthy layoff from live game action, it was encouraging that Ohio State was flagged only three times for 14 yards and committed just one turnover.

The only time Ohio State coughed up the ball came on a play where Olave was hit so hard, he was knocked out of the game. I’m not sure the stickiest-fingered of ballplayers could have held on to that one.

Championship teams don’t defeat themselves, and the coaches had to be pleased with those numbers.

### Barrett, Bosa Shine

When you win a national championship, of course it’s about the games you win, but it is also about the games you don’t lose. Such was the case when Ohio State traveled to Happy Valley in 2014 and defeated Penn State in double overtime, 31-24, in a game designated as BSB’s 40th Anniversary game for the week of Oct. 24-30.

The Buckeyes already had a loss to Virginia Tech on the season, so another defeat would have dashed any championship hopes right there. Ohio State had responded to the loss to the Hokies with wins over the likes of Kent State, Cincinnati, Maryland and Rutgers. The trip to Penn State, however, was the first real test for Ohio State and freshman quarterback J.T. Barrett since the loss, a trip on which the Buckeyes would not only have to deal with the Lions but also the always hostile environment.

The Buckeyes met the challenge with the gritty win, a victory that solidified the status of Barrett and sophomore defensive end Joey Bosa with Buckeye fans and other observers.

“A great win against a quality opponent in one of the toughest environments that you will ever have,” said OSU coach Urban Meyer.

Ohio State took a 17-0 lead into halftime, but a pair of interceptions thrown by Barrett, who had injured his knee in the first half, helped the Lions roar back and tie the game on a field goal with nine seconds left in regulation. One of Barrett’s errant throws was a pick-six to give the Lions their first points of the game.

It was in the overtime that Barrett and Bosa shined.

Penn State scored a TD to open the first OT. If there was any thought by the coaches of not sending Barrett back out there, the freshman signal caller eliminated that notion. Playing in his first true hostile road environment, Barrett told OSU offensive coordinator Tom Herman over the headset that he was ready.

“Otherwise (the win) wouldn’t have happened,” Barrett said. “I would have been on the sideline or something.”

“Despite deafening noise from Penn State’s

‘White Out’ crowd, Ohio State answered with a touchdown on its possession in the first OT,” BSB reported in its Nov. 1, 2014, issue. “After Ezekiel Elliott rushed for 3 yards on the drive’s first play, Barrett took care of the rest. First, he kept on an option run that went 17 yards, and Barrett then called his own number for a 5-yard TD.”

On the extra-point attempt, Penn State was flagged for leaping, and the Buckeyes started the second overtime on the 12½-yard line. Elliott rushed for 2, Barrett added 6 on a scramble and then the gimpy-kneed quarterback went the final 4 yards on a QB keeper.

Herman said there was never any doubt that Barrett was the man to lead the Buckeyes in overtime.

“Not him. Not him. No. No concern,” Herman said. “We believe in him. He’s done too many good things in his seven games here for us to not. He’d be the first to tell you he didn’t play well at times, but when we needed him, boy did he ever.”

Barrett’s two OT touchdowns set up one of the most memorable defensive plays in Ohio State history. The Buckeye defense forced Penn State quarterback Christian Hackenberg into a fourth-and-5 with the game on the line. I’ll let former BSB staff writer Ryan Ginn take over from there:

“Luckily for the Buckeyes, they have sophomore defensive end Joey Bosa, a one-man wrecking crew whose laid-back demeanor turns into a ruthless disposition once he steps on the field,” Ginn wrote at the time. “The Florida native made the play that won the game, charging into the backfield on fourth down in double overtime and driving helpless running back Akeel Lynch into quarterback Christian Hackenberg, who went down for the game-ending sack. Bosa’s walk-off walloping was just another highlight in a short career filled with them.”

It was a play that almost never was. “That wasn’t what I was supposed to do,” Bosa said after the game. “I was supposed to hit the guard and wrap up, but he blocked down so the hole opened so I just took it. I was tired of trying to work my way around the back, so I just ran over him.”

It takes a team effort to win a game like the one with Penn State, just as it takes a team effort to win a national championship.

“While the resolve displayed was team-wide, the overtime was really dominated by two players – two players whom you would expect to step up when the game was on the line in Barrett and defensive end Joey Bosa,” I wrote in this space after the game.

“I have always maintained that big-time players make big-time plays in big games, and this Buckeye duo lived up to that credo.

“The gimpy Barrett gained 32 yards on four carries in overtime, scoring both of OSU’s touchdowns. Bosa, who dominated the game far more than his six tackles and 2½ sacks would indicate, added another highlight-reel play to his growing catalog when he smashed the 221-pound Akeel Lynch into Hackenberg to end the game.”

For the evening, Barrett carried 20 times for 75 yards. He was 12 of 19 through the air for just 74 yards and a touchdown and the two interceptions. His play in overtime made up for any regulation shortcomings. Ohio State would reel off eight more wins after departing Happy Valley, though Barrett missed the final three – the magical run to the title – after being injured in the Michigan game.

But that magical run would never have been if it weren’t for Barrett and Bosa that night in Happy Valley.



FOR ATHLETES

HEADS UP  
CONCUSSION  
IN YOUTH SPORTS

- CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS
- Headache, nausea vomiting, balance problems, dizziness double or blurred vision, sensitivity to light or noise, feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy, memory problems, confusion, just not "feeling right" or "feeling down".

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?  
A concussion is a brain injury that affects how your brain works. It can happen when your brain gets bounced around in your skull after a fall or hit to the head.



WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?



**REPORT IT.** Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. It's up to you to report your symptoms. Your coach and team are relying on you. Plus, you won't play your best if you are not feeling well.

**GET CHECKED OUT.** If you think you have a concussion, do not return to play on the day of the injury. Only a health care provider can tell if you have a concussion and when it is OK to return to school and play. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play.

**GIVE YOUR BRAIN TIME TO HEAL.** A concussion can make everyday activities, such as going to school, harder. You may need extra help getting back to your normal activities. Be sure to update your parents and doctor about how you are feeling.

WHY SHOULD I TELL MY COACH & PARENTS ABOUT MY SYMPTOMS?

Playing or practicing with a concussion is dangerous and can lead to a longer recovery.

While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. This can put you at risk for a more serious injury to your brain

GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW: IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/concussion>



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
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