

Ohio State's Canceled Game Against Cincinnati In The 1800s



There is plenty of uncertainty about the incoming college football season due to the fear of spreading coronavirus, which has already delayed or canceled every major spring sport.

But before anything is decided, there have already been three times in Ohio State's college football history that major historical events that go past the game of football shifted the Buckeyes' schedule.

These include the 1918 Spanish Flu, which held Ohio State out of football for almost a month, and forced the Buckeyes to play only three Big Ten games, each of which they lost.

An Ohio State-Michigan game was delayed following the assassination of John F. Kennedy, which occurred on Friday, Nov. 22, 1963. The teams decided to reschedule that game for a week later, but did not decide until the morning of the game.

"There were a lot of big college football games, that's a big rivalry weekend. Some of them were played, some of them are canceled and never played. And some of them were postponed," Ohio State historian Jack Park told Buckeye Sports Bulletin. "As people went to bed Friday night, the game was on."

The last time a game was delayed was following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. College football as a whole shut down that weekend, and Ohio State moved its game against San Diego State to later on the schedule.

But Park said those are likely not the only times Ohio State football games have been moved or canceled. He said there are probably other moments in the early days of the sport where games were canceled, rescheduled or delayed.

"I'll bet there were some games back, like from 1890 up through maybe 1900, 1905 or something like that, that were probably canceled because it was just so informal," Park said. "Years ago when I coached my three kids in Little League and Youth League softball and baseball here in Upper Arlington, the seasons always were going to be over by around the first of July and then you played an all-star game on July 4.

"So if you got into fairly late June and you got a game rained out, say on a Tuesday night, then you'd call the other coach in and the other father and say, 'Hey, I think I can get enough of my kids together on

Saturday. Do you think you could get enough kids together on Saturday? And if you can, I'll call the commissioner, we'll reserve a diamond and we'll play the game on Saturday.' And we did that a lot. You know, well that's kind of how football was back in the day."

Park recalled a certain instance in this time between Cincinnati and Ohio State, with the Bearcats refusing to play the Buckeyes on less than a week's notice.

"We were to play Cincinnati in Columbus, now this is back around somewhere in the 1800s. We're just getting started playing football and we were to place Cincinnati in Columbus on a Saturday," Park said. "Cincinnati called on Thursday and said that they weren't going to come up. They didn't want to play the game, two days before the game.

"So Ohio State, used the old, I suppose the old telegraph, put out a telegraph to other schools in Ohio that we have an opening Saturday. And if anybody wants to come to Columbus and play, we have an opening on Saturday, and Marietta responded, and came up on Friday and played that game in Columbus on Saturday. With two days notice."

In the two teams' histories, Ohio State and Marietta played each other eight times, battling each year from 1892-95, and then again in 1898, 1899, 1901 and 1902. The Buckeyes won six of those matchups, while Marietta took the games in 1895 and 1898.

The Bearcats appeared to have more of a chance to take down Ohio State, winning games in 1896 and 1897, while the Buckeyes won from 1893-95, and then again in 1900.

Why did Cincinnati not want to play? It's almost impossible to know now. But back in the early days of college football, apparently all it took was two days notice and any game could be called off and rescheduled.

"A lot of times schedules were put together as the season went along," Park said. "That's such an unusual thing, but that was one of the best indicators of how informal things were back then."

To read the story on the three times in the 1900s when Ohio State had games canceled rescheduled, sign up for the print edition of Buckeye Sports Bulletin. For four free issues, no card required, sign up at the link here: <http://www.buckeyesports.com/subscribe-4issue-trial/>