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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Nov. 16, 2024

Buckeyes Show No Mercy In 45-0 Trouncing Of Boilermakers

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Coming off an emotional and season-changing 20-13 road victory at Penn State on Nov. 2, Ohio State likely spent the week of practice leading up to Purdue desperately trying to avoid any letdown in energy or focus.

Although each of the Buckeyes' three main goals for this 2024 season is in front of them, there is always a chance for a step back in momentum following such a victory, especially when the very next opponent is one of the worst teams in the entire FBS this season, that being the 1-7 Purdue Boilermakers, who came into the contest 119th in the nation in scoring offense (20.3 points per game) and 127th in scoring defense (36.9 points allowed per game).

The Buckeyes didn't have to look too far to see what could happen if a highly ranked team overlooks an inferior opponent. Six weeks ago, then-No. 1 Alabama, fresh off a classic 41-34 home win over archrival Georgia in prime time, fell on the road to unranked Vanderbilt by a score of 40-35, a shocking defeat that momentarily turned its season sideways. The Tide now boast two losses before post-season play, which was unheard of in Tuscaloosa, Ala., when Nick Saban was pacing the sidelines.

Then, just last week, a similar situation occurred for Georgia. After the Bulldogs came away with a statement 30-15 road victory over then-No. 1 Texas on Oct. 19, Kirby Smart's team came out flat in their next game against rival Florida on Nov. 2, needing a late-game surge to turn a 20-20 tie game into a 34-20 victory. That game may not have resulted in a loss, but it did expose some cracks in Georgia's foundation, leading it to fall the very next week to No. 16 Ole Miss in uninspiring fashion, losing 28-10 on the road.

Although he may not always admit it, Ryan



SCOTT STUART

EYES ON THE PRIZE — Following an Oct. 12 loss to Oregon, Ohio State knew it couldn't afford a slip-up against overmatched Purdue and delivered a knockout punch to the Boilermakers in the 45-0 victory, including Jack Sawyer's scoop-and-score (above) in the third quarter.

Day and his staff are constantly tuned into what is going on in the college football world outside of Columbus, likely finding ways to use what has happened to other teams – especially other good teams – into talking points

or motivational tools for their own program.

According to those within the program, there was no time to come out flat and limp to an unimpressive win against the Boilermakers. The Buckeyes wanted to start fast and keep their foot on the pedal, and that's exactly what they did on Nov. 9 at Ohio Stadium, trouncing Purdue by a score of 45-0 to earn their eighth win in nine tries this season and second shutout.

"We weren't naive to the fact of what takes place after big wins," senior tight end Gee Scott Jr. said after the game. "We see across college football some of the unfortunate things that happen after big wins, and teams like to take exhales in that time. And I think the emphasis that Coach Day had for this team the

entire time is that we don't get to exhale. It's just time to go harder, and I think we came out and we executed at a high level.

"We had a really hard practice week. We went right back to work. We enjoyed the win, obviously, on (Nov. 2), and then (Nov. 3) we celebrated it. But by the time we got to (Nov. 5) practice, Penn State was behind us, and it was all on to this week."

"It wasn't all clean today," Day said after the game with the Boilers. "It wasn't. But I thought the guys played hard, and it was good to see us respond coming off an emotional win. You watch all across college football – we've been a part of that too, where you come

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FAN FORUM

Buckeye Leaves

No. 2 Ohio State picked up its second shutout of the season on Nov. 9 against Purdue, blanking the Boilermakers 45-0 at Ohio Stadium to improve to 8-1 on the year and 5-1 in the Big Ten. Here are some choices from Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff members and readers from the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum for players who were worthy of receiving Buckeye Leaves after the win.

Patrick Engels, BSB: Ohio State had one of its best defensive outings of the season Nov. 9 against Purdue, and leading that charge for the Buckeyes was senior nickel cornerback Jordan Hancock.

Hancock has been somewhat overlooked on the Ohio State secondary this season with Caleb Downs being as advertised and Denzel Burke garnering headlines due to his struggles, but he certainly made people notice him against the Boilermakers with a number of impact plays.

Hancock seemed to be all over the field for Ohio State, running sideline-to-sideline for a pair of tackles near the line of scrimmage and then also getting into the backfield to combine for a sack with Jack Sawyer in the second quarter that turned the Boilermakers over on downs.

The Suwanee, Ga., native was also impactful in the secondary, breaking up a Hudson Card pass intended for tight end Max Klare in the third quarter that forced another Purdue punt and gave the ball back to Ohio State, which would score its sixth touchdown of the game on that drive.

Hancock finished with three tackles (two solo), one half sack and a pass breakup on the day, another strong performance in what has been a very solid Ohio State career for the senior.

Bobby Gorbett, BSB: It seems impossible for someone as talented and accomplished as TreVeyon Henderson to be overlooked at any point of the season, but in some ways it feels as though Ohio State's senior running back has been just that over the past few weeks.

Henderson made sure to remind Buckeye fans exactly what he was capable of in Ohio State's 45-0 win over Purdue on Nov. 9. He made the most of only six carries, totaling 85 yards while rushing for his first touchdown since the Buckeyes' 49-14 win over Marshall on Sept. 21.

Henderson also produced as a pass-catcher out of the backfield and finished the game as the Buckeyes' third-leading receiver with three receptions for 43 yards.

He had four carries that went for at least 10 yards, including his 19-yard touchdown run in the third quarter that extinguished any last hope for the Boilermakers, putting the Buckeyes up 31-0.

Cameron Moone, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf will go to Will Howard, who had arguably his cleanest game for Ohio State, throwing for 260 yards and three touchdowns, plus a rushing touchdown in the first quarter that gave the Buckeyes a lead they never were in danger of losing in the team's 45-0 win over Purdue on Nov. 9.

Howard's four total scores were the second most he has had in a game all season, only trailing his five-touchdown effort against Iowa (four passing, one rushing). The former Kansas State gunslinger connected with eight different pass catchers against the Boilermakers and brought his season total touchdowns to 28.

Arguably the best play of the day for Howard was when he found tight end Gee Scott Jr. on a 15-yard pitch and catch that gave Ohio State a 14-0 lead in the second quarter. Howard allowed for the play to develop and found the crossing Scott underneath, a testament to the quarterback's patience and accuracy. He has a 74.0 completion percentage this season.

Greg Wilson, BSB: Jeremiah Smith broke Cris Carter's record for receiving yards in a freshman season against Penn State last week, and it took him just one more week to top Carter in receptions and touchdowns.

With his third catch of the day – a 16-yard reception in the second quarter – Smith broke Carter's record for total catches in a freshman season. His 42nd catch of his young career wasn't his last of the game, though, or even his last record-breaking catch.

Later in the second quarter, Will Howard found Smith on a slant that he caught at the Purdue 15-yard line, and he got the edge on Boilermakers cornerback Nyland Green to trot into the end zone for another touchdown.

That score broke Carter's record for most receiving touchdowns in a season by a freshman, giving him nine through nine games.

Smith finished the game with a team-high six catches for 87 yards and a score.

BSB Subscribers:

Bob Cody: Lots of Buckeye Leaves earned for this shutout blowout. Will Howard, Gee Scott, Jeremiah Smith, TreVeyon Henderson, Emeka Egbuka. JT Tuimoloau and Jack Sawyer on the scoop and score – right after Gus Johnson and Joel Klatt were knocking them during the telecast. Jordan Hancock, Lathan Ransom, and one for the pride of Marysville, Ohio – Gabe Powers – for planting the Purdue running back when he had his chance off the bench.

BuckeyeScott: Give Buckeye Leaves to Caden Curry and the punt return team for the punt block that ignited the Buckeyes. It's good to see special teams contribute to a win.

PeyoteBuck: Gee Scott Jr. I've rooted for him during his Buckeye career, and he is earning his keep. He's a worker bee.

John Lanning: There is something going on ...new looks on offense, new looks on defense. I like it. My leaves go to the coaching staff.

Tiffin Buckeye: Will Howard, great game again.

Poster That Harley Built: In a 45-0 win there are plenty of Leaves to go around. But I'm giving mine to JTT and Jack Sawyer. The guys have been maligned this season, and arguably rightfully so given their abilities and expectations. But maybe they are rounding into form at the right time. An honorary Leaf to the Purdue placekicker, who helped preserve the shutout for Ohio State.

Mcarr: Plenty of guys on defense to choose from, but I'm picking a guy on offense. TreVeyon Henderson showed the type of game he is capable of with a 14.2-yards per carry average and three receptions for another 43 yards.

R1TBDBITL: Leaves to JTT and Sawyer. After the feature FOX did on both of them in the pregame show, JTT gets the swat, and Jack gets the scoop and score. Déjà vu all over again.



From The Message Board

We are now more than halfway through the 2024 college football season, one which has brought great change to the sport in many ways. One of those ways has been conference expansion.

With just three more weeks left on the Big Ten schedule, we asked readers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum how they think the conference's merger with Oregon, Washington, UCLA and USC has gone so far, as well as what they have and haven't liked about the conference expanding to 18 teams.

"It makes more marquee matchups in name, because playing teams like UCLA, Washington, USC and Oregon sounds sexy, but I have been surprised that the West Coast teams, with the exception of Oregon, have not done better. UCLA did score a big win for it by beating Iowa, but it is still tied for ninth in the standings. Remarkably, that puts them ahead of USC at 16th. The Trojans are ahead of only Maryland and Purdue, but behind Northwestern."

– **Mcarr**

"I think I will have more of an opinion of the expansion at the end of the season. For me, it's still a work in progress. Let's see how the playoff goes. No complaints so far. I like playing the different teams."

– **PeyoteBuck**

"The West Coast addition of four teams has been good for the BIG. There have been so many more interesting games. With these additions, it is forcing

other member schools to improve – i.e. Indiana, Illinois, etc. – and move the BIG to the leadership conference where it belongs."

– **John Lanning**

"I don't know if it is the fact that they are the Pac-12 schools. It's that there are too many teams now, period, especially for one division. You have a decent season by the standards of many of the Big Ten teams and you get to tell your fans that you finished in ninth or tenth place.

"I also think it will be harder to develop or maintain rivalries when there are so many teams that you don't play as often as you might have with 12 or 14 or — God forbid — 10 teams. Also, will the geographic expansion make it more difficult for average fans to frequent road games? It's not like you can just hop in the car and drive to Seattle for a day.

"The one good thing about the westward expansion is that we get to see

firsthand how overrated Lincoln Riley is."

– **Poster That Harley Built**

"I don't like the expansion, as it messes with tradition and history. I also don't like that they nuked the Pac-12 to get there. Geographically, it makes no sense. Environmentally, it makes no sense. Scholastically, it makes no sense. But none of that matters when it comes to \$\$\$\$."

– **R1TBDBITL**

"If it was deemed necessary to expand, there are plenty of universities in closer proximity who would have been more sensible additions to the B1G. Kansas, Missouri, Iowa State, Kansas State and several others. If you want a big TV market, there's Houston and Texas. West Coast teams make no sense whatsoever, and I'll say nothing about the women's volleyball team flying from UCLA to Rutgers in winter."

– **Terrier Buck**

"At this point I'm still in the 'show me' mode, that this B1G expansion is a good thing. I'm still trying to get my arms around NIL and the portal and its effect on teams that typically would take years to develop a football program, i.e. Indiana.

"Yes, we currently have a B1G team at the top of the mountain, Oregon, and the Ohio State Buckeyes and other traditional B1G programs are in quick pursuit. However, does any of that all matter now that we have a 12-team playoff? Besides what a student-athlete must go through to travel from coast to coast and then potentially turn right around and travel back to the other coast.

"What about travel for other students and the fans of the teams? How can that be a good thing? It's only going to get worse in other sports that play multiple games per week. I'm thinking divisions will make a comeback."

– **BuckeyeScott**

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Defense Comes Up Big Vs. Purdue

Once upon a time, shutouts used to be a thing in college football.

For example, Ohio State piled up 39 shutouts during the 28-year reign of Woody Hayes as head coach – 41, if you count a pair of 0-0 decisions – while the subsequent regimes of Earle Bruce, John Cooper, Jim Tressel, Luke Fickell, Urban Meyer and Ryan Day have combined to produce only 36 shutouts over 37 seasons.

I bring this up only because the Buckeyes rolled to a 45-0 victory against Purdue on Nov. 9, a shutout aided by the fact the Boilermakers – acknowledged as the worst team in the expanded Big Ten – blew a handful of scoring opportunities, including a 21-yard field-goal attempt late in the first quarter.

How hard are shutouts to come by these days? Well, the one against Purdue was the first shutout of a Big Ten opponent for Ohio State in more than seven years. The most recent was a 56-0 win at Rutgers on Sept. 30, 2017, and for the last home shutout of a conference rival, you have to go back one more year to a 58-0 victory against the Scarlet Knights on Oct. 1, 2016.

Coupled with the 56-0 win against Western Michigan in early September, the Buckeyes have now recorded two shutouts in the same season for the first time since the national championship run 10 years ago. OSU blanked Kent State, 66-0, in September 2014 and then rolled to a 59-0 win against Wisconsin in December during that season's Big Ten Championship Game.

The last time Ohio State shut out three opponents during the same season? Toledo (38-0), Illinois (30-0) and New Mexico State (45-0) in 2009. And if you're looking for the last time OSU shut out more than one Big Ten opponent in the same season, you have to get into Mr. Peabody's Wayback Machine because that hasn't happened since back-to-back November afternoons in 1996 against Minnesota (45-0) and Illinois (48-0).

Defense was on full display against Purdue, as it has been since a widely criticized (and rightfully so) performance against Oregon in mid-October. The Buckeyes gave up a season-high 32 points as well as a season-high 496 total yards during a top-five showdown that proved – at least at the time – that Ohio State could talk the national championship talk but was well short of being able to walk the walk.

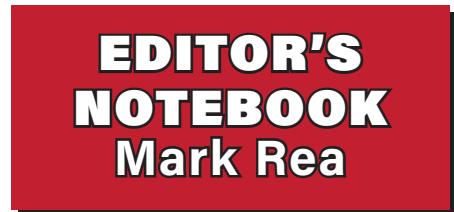
Over the three games that have followed, however, the OSU defense has arrived at the logical conclusion that it must play better. Consequently, the Buckeyes have allowed only one offensive touchdown during those three games – none in the last two – and are giving up an average of less than 250 total yards per game (249.7 to be exact).

Against Purdue, defensive coordinator Jim Knowles appeared to be experimenting because he knew the Boilermakers didn't represent much of a threat. That included a return to the alignment with the stand-up "Jack" defender that subs out a defensive end for a player who can line up anywhere with the intention of attacking any gap in the opposing offensive line.

As any member of Buckeye Nation can tell you, that alignment didn't work all that well when Knowles got to Columbus in 2022, and it didn't seem to work any better against Purdue, a team that entered the game ranked 15th in the Big Ten and 111th nationally in total offense. The Boilermakers finished with only 206 total yards, but they got more than one-third of that total on one possession – an 11-play, 72-yard drive in the first quarter – when

the Buckeyes were mostly in their Jack alignment.

Ohio State had much more success with its standard four-man front and Knowles dialing up pressure against Purdue QB Hudson Card, who finished with only 108 yards through the air – 28 of that thanks to a third-quarter circus catch by receiver Jaron Tibbs.



Card spent most of the afternoon running for his life against a resurgent OSU pass rush that resulted in four sacks among five tackles for loss as well as five quarterback hurries.

The highlight among those behind-enemy-lines stops was the combo punch from JT Tuimolou and Jack Sawyer, the defensive end pair of whom not nearly enough has been seen this season. But late in the third quarter, Tuimolou stripped Card of the football after which Sawyer scooped up the fumble and ran 11 yards for a touchdown.

While the defense was continuing to put the performance against Oregon farther into its rearview mirror, the offense had a workmanlike day with most of the usual suspects doing what they do best.

Will Howard completed 21 of 26 passes to give him a fifth game this season with a completion rate of 80 percent or better. His pass percentage of 74.0 through nine games is second in the Big Ten and nationally and is on track to break the single-season program record of 71.9 set by C.J. Stroud in 2021.

Howard also threw for two more touchdowns to give him 22 this season, just two fewer than Kyle McCord had all of last season.

Of course, it helps to have a run game that averaged 4.9 yards per carry on 35 attempts and a talented bunch of receivers the likes of Emeka Egbuka, Carnell Tate and Jeremiah Smith, who now owns all of the freshman receiving records with as many as six or seven games remaining in the season.

That trio was targeted 17 times against the Boilermakers and came up with 13 catches worth 153 yards and two touchdowns.

Crunching Numbers

- TreVeyon Henderson's 85 yards on the ground against Purdue gave him 3,333 for his career and allowed him to move past a couple of quarterbacks – J.T. Barrett (3,263, 2014-17) and Braxton Miller (3,314, 2011-13, '15) – into eighth place on OSU's career rushing list. Next up is Chris "Beanie" Wells, who ran for 3,382 yards from 2006-08.

- Henderson also scored his 37th career rushing touchdown, moving into a tie for seventh place on that career list with Carlos Hyde (2010-13). The tops in program history are Pete Johnson (56, 1973-76), Keith Byars (46, 1982-85), Eddie George (44, 1992-95), Ezekiel Elliott (43, 2013-15), Barrett (43, 2014-17) and J.K. Dobbins (38, 2017-19).

- Egbuka waited until early in the fourth quarter to extend his streak of consecutive games with at least one catch. His 10-yard touchdown grab was his lone catch of the game, but it was enough to push his streak to 33 straight games with a reception. That is now the fourth-longest streak in OSU history. Gary Williams (1979-82) set the record with 48 straight, a mark equaled by K.J. Hill

(2016-19). Michael Jenkins (2001-03) owns the third-longest streak at 39.

- Sawyer's scoop-and-score on that late third-quarter fumble return not only served as the junior defensive end's first career touchdown, but it was also the first time an Ohio State defensive player wearing jersey No. 33 crossed the goal line in nearly 40 years. Linebacker Larry Kolic was wearing that number when he returned an interception 14 yards for the winning touchdown during a 10-7 win against BYU in the 1985 Citrus Bowl.

- Jayden Fielding's 42-yard field goal midway through the third quarter was the longest three-pointer for an OSU kicker against Purdue since Aaron Pettrey nailed a 49-yarder during a 16-3 win against the Boilermakers in 2008. Fielding now has nine career field goals of 40 yards or longer.

Not Your Daddy's Indiana

Maybe you've been wondering just how Indiana – the losingest football program in major-college football history – got to a 10-0 record for the first time ever.

Well, it seems the Hoosiers sacrificed long-term stability to take a shot at lightning in a bottle. First-year head coach Curt Cignetti took one look at what he had on his roster and went shopping at the college free-agent mall also known as the transfer portal.

IU took transfers with just one year of eligibility remaining (potential medical exceptions aside) at quarterback, wide receiver, running back and offensive line as well as 10 of the 11 starting positions on defense.

Statistically, Indiana's leading passer, its four leading rushers, five of its six leading receivers, its top four tacklers and all four players with at least 1½ sacks so far this season are transfers. After the Hoosiers' 20-15 win against defending national champion Michigan, QB Kurtis Rourke (Ohio University), WR Elijah Sarratt (James Madison), DL Mikail Kamara (James Madison) and LB Aiden Fisher (James Madison) each ranked top-five or better in the Big Ten in passing yards, completion percentage and touchdowns, receiving yards, sacks and tackles for loss, and total tackles.

Cignetti said the major difference is the team's mind-set. With a 38-33 loss to Maryland in 2022, Indiana became the first Division I team ever to lose 700 games. Since then ...

"They believe they're going to win," said Cignetti, who has never had a losing season in 13 years as a head coach at Division II-level Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Football Championship Subdivision member Elon, and James Madison, also an FCS member. "They think like champions. They believe in the coaches. They believe in the program. They believe they're going to step foot on (campus) and make a difference."

Believing in oneself has often been an ingredient for success. IU's win against Michigan was only its third in their last 45 meetings.

Now, Indiana seeks to scale an even higher mountain. Since beating Ohio State in 1951, the Hoosiers have a 2-60-2 record against the Buckeyes. That includes a current 29-game losing streak in the series.

There is one more historical hurdle facing the Hoosiers when they come to Columbus on Nov. 23. Oregon has already beaten Ohio State and Michigan this season, becoming the first team since Michigan State in 2013 to beat the Buckeyes and Wolverines in the same season. It has been exactly 25 years since two different teams claimed victory against OSU and Michigan during the same season. Michigan State and Illinois turned the trick in 1999.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

Ohio State No. 2 In First CFP Poll

In the first 12-team version of the College Football Playoff rankings released on Nov. 5 – four days before a chaotic Week 11 slate that will have a major impact on the rankings released on Nov. 12 – Ohio State was ranked the No. 2 team in the country, coming in behind No. 1 Oregon.

Oregon and Ohio State will likely claim the top two spots again in the rankings that were set to come out after BSB went to press. The Ducks came out on top over Maryland and the Buckeyes over Purdue, but No. 3 Georgia and No. 4 Miami (Fla.) will drop down significantly after they each fell in upset losses, the Bulldogs falling to No. 16 Ole Miss 28-10 and the Hurricanes falling 28-23 to unranked Georgia Tech, both on the road.

Rounding out the top five was No. 5 Texas, while No. 6 Penn State, No. 7 Tennessee, No. 8 Indiana, No. 9 BYU and No. 10 Notre Dame made up the top 10. Each of those teams is expected to receive a bump

in the rankings next week after coming away with wins in Week 10, especially Indiana, which is now a program-record 10-0 after a 20-15 win over Michigan.

Outside of Oregon, Ohio State, Penn State and Indiana, there were no other Big Ten teams within the first CFP rankings.

With the Buckeyes sitting at No. 2 with three games remaining on the schedule, Ryan Day's team is likely to make the College Football Playoff for the first time since 2022 and the fourth time in his six seasons. This year's playoff marks the first 12-team field, however, which, as of the first rankings, has Ohio State playing in the first round rather than earning a bye.

With the bye going to only the four highest-ranked conference champions, the Buckeyes are the No. 5 seed in the first CFP bracket, with Oregon (Big Ten), Georgia (SEC), Miami (ACC) and BYU (Big 12) occupying the top four seeds. The Buckeyes were projected in this bracket to host a first-round playoff game against No. 12 Boise State, which is the highest-ranked non-Power Four conference team.

Ohio State will be the No. 5 seed again in the next bracket released Nov. 12 because Oregon stayed unbeaten, but Georgia and Miami will likely fall out of the bye following their losses.

That could clear the way for other teams to receive byes, including Texas, which came away with a convincing 49-17 win over Florida and will likely be the highest-ranked SEC team, and SMU, which is ranked No. 13 in the first CFP poll but will likely be the highest-ranked ACC team following Miami's loss.

2024 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Aug. 31	AKRON	W, 52-6	CBS	2-7, idle
Sept. 7	WESTERN MICHIGAN	W, 56-0	BTN	5-4, 42-28 loss to No. Illinois
Sept. 21	MARSHALL	W, 49-14	FOX	6-3, 37-3 win over Southern Miss
Sept. 28	at Michigan State	W, 38-7	Peacock	4-5, idle
Oct. 5	IOWA	W, 35-7	CBS	6-4, 20-17 loss to UCLA
Oct. 12	at Oregon	L, 32-31	NBC	10-0, 39-18 win over Maryland
Oct. 26	NEBRASKA	W, 21-17	FOX	5-4, idle
Nov. 2	at Penn State	W, 20-13	FOX	8-1, 35-6 win over Washington
Nov. 9	PURDUE	W, 45-0	FOX	1-8, 45-0 loss to Ohio State
Nov. 16	at Northwestern	Noon	BTN	4-5, idle
Nov. 23	INDIANA	TBA	TBA	10-0, 20-15 win over Michigan
Nov. 30	MICHIGAN	Noon	FOX	5-5, 20-15 loss to Indiana

CFP rankings will be released every Tuesday until the final rankings and 12-team bracket are revealed on Dec. 8 following the conclusion of conference championship weekend.

Ohio State also was No. 2 behind Oregon in the latest AP top 25 poll released on Nov. 10, one day after the Buckeyes' 45-0 win over Purdue. The Buckeyes surpassed Georgia in the rankings following its loss, which dropped the Bulldogs nine spots to No. 11.

The Bulldogs' loss cleared the way for four Big Ten teams to be featured in the top five of the rankings, including Oregon, Ohio State, No. 4 Penn State and No. 5 Indiana, with Texas at No. 3. The rest of the top 10 is occupied by No. 6 Tennessee, No. 7 BYU, No. 8 Notre Dame, No. 9 Alabama and No. 10 Ole Miss, which jumped six spots from No. 16.

Kacmarek, Michalski Out Again Against Purdue

The Buckeyes were without both tight end Will Kacmarek and offensive lineman Zen Michalski for the second straight game in their 45-0 win over Purdue.

Kacmarek has missed the last three games dating back to an injury he suffered after a catch in the first quarter of the team's 32-31 loss to Oregon. According to Day, Kacmarek is making good progress in coming back from the injury.

"He's doing great," Day said of Kac-

marek's injury on Nov. 6. "All the reports back from the training room and (strength and conditioning coach Mickey Marotti) is that he's a little bit ahead of schedule. That's encouraging. We're excited to hopefully get him back here in a couple of weeks."

In his first six games with the Buckeyes, Kacmarek received considerable playing time as the team's second-string tight end behind Gee Scott Jr. and hauled in five catches for 58 yards.

Michalski meanwhile started only one game for the Buckeyes this year and came in after starting left tackle Josh Simmons went down with a season-ending injury against Oregon. Michalski struggled against Nebraska before suffering an injury of his own in the fourth quarter of that game.

Also out for the game were tight end Jace Middleton, cornerback Calvin Simpson-Hunt, Simmons and running back TC Caffey, who is out for the season.

OSU-Northwestern Set For Noon Kick On BTN

Ohio State's Nov. 16 game against Northwestern at historic Wrigley Field is set for a noon kickoff (11 a.m. Central Standard Time) on Big Ten Network, the school announced on Nov. 4.

This will mark the fourth straight week that the Buckeyes will be playing at noon, with their last three wins against Nebraska on Oct. 26, Penn State on Nov. 2 and

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Purdue on Nov. 9 all being part of FOX's "Big Noon Kickoff." Ohio State also was featured on FOX's marquee game for its Sept. 21 home win over Marshall and will be again for the team's regular-season finale against Michigan on Nov. 30.

It will also be just the second time this season the Buckeyes will be featured on Big Ten Network, the first being their 56-0 blowout home win over Western Michigan on Sept. 7.

Ohio State and Northwestern will meet for the 78th time in history, with the Buckeyes owning a 63-13-1 lead over their Big Ten foes as well as a 32-game win streak over the Wildcats. Northwestern's last win over Ohio State occurred on Nov. 13, 1971, when it defeated the Woody Hayes-led Buckeyes 14-10 at Ohio Stadium to knock them out of Big Ten contention.

Ohio State has played Northwestern either on the road or at a neutral site the last five times, the most recent being on Nov. 5, 2022, when the then-No. 2-ranked Buckeyes went into a windy Ryan Field to defeat the Wildcats 21-7 behind 111 rushing yards and two scores from Miyan Williams.

The 2024 matchup between Northwestern and Ohio State will take place in 110-year old Wrigley Field in Chicago, one of two games the Wildcats will play at the Chicago Cubs' 41,649-seat ballpark this season due to their usual home of Ryan Field undergoing an \$800 million renova-

tion project.

The Wildcats played their first five home games at Northwestern Medicine Field at Martin Stadium in Evanston, Ill., which is situated alongside the coast of Lake Michigan and seats roughly 12,000 people, but they will return to Wrigley Field for their regular-season finale against Illinois on Nov. 30.

Day Keeping Same O-Line Moving Forward

In a press conference on Nov. 5, Day announced the plan for Ohio State is to stick with the offensive line configuration it had on the field for its 20-13 win over Penn State.

After the injury of left tackles Michalski and Simmons in the Nebraska and Oregon games, respectively, the Buckeyes had to make a couple of switches to their offensive line before the Penn State game.

The Buckeyes moved usual starting left guard Donovan Jackson to left tackle and started last year's starting center Carson Hinzman at left guard. Although Hinzman was a starter in 2023 at center, he didn't have the easiest path to start for the Buckeyes again this year. Hinzman was benched before Ohio State's loss in the Cotton Bowl to Missouri and replaced by former Alabama starting center Seth McLaughlin heading into the 2024 season.

Day said the choice to insert him into

BSB Offering Reduction In First-Class Mail Rate

For a limited time, Buckeye Sports Bulletin is offering a discount on the cost of a subscription upgrade to first class mail during football season or through football recruiting season in February. The first class upgrade for football season, regularly \$30, will be just \$16, and the upgrade through the traditional National Signing Day in February will be just \$26, down from \$40.

"We think we can offset the cost of this discount with a reduction in

the number of replacement papers we have to send out and a reduction in the number of subscriptions we have been losing because of untimely delivery," BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz said.

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the lineup came down to experience.

"We looked at him during the preseason," Day said. "He was out with illness. He was playing backup center. We moved him to guard. We felt like at that time Tegra (Tshabola) gave us more at right guard, and with (Jackson) at left guard, Seth was solidified at center, so we kept Carson right there at center at the time. Since Donovan got moved out, we felt like there was a hole there that we needed to fill, and we had a couple of different options there and some good options, but in this game, we felt like

experience was the right thing to go with."

Neither player played perfectly, and Jackson specifically gave up two sacks to star Penn State edge rusher Abdul Carter, but both players were named offensive players of the game, along with fellow offensive linemen Josh Fryar and McLaughlin, while grading out as champions. Additionally, other than Carter's two sacks on starting quarterback Will Howard, the Buckeyes allowed only one more sack in the entire

Continued On Page 6

BSB Subscribers Show Support Through VIP Program

Now is the time for loyal Buckeye Sports Bulletin readers to show their support through our VIP subscription program as we struggle through these times of high inflation, which have affected all small businesses. As most of you know, the newspaper business these days is challenging in even the best of times.

"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, what we have done the previous 43 years and what we plan to do in the future."

A VIP upgrade can easily pay for itself each year with special VIP discounts and perks.

VIP subscribers enjoy a 5 percent discount on any Ohio State football trip booked through Reynolds Travel. And VIP subscribers receive a certificate good for \$10 off at Roosters restaurants, the "Fun, Casual Joint," a \$10 gift card from College Traditions, as well as a card from either Rusty Bucket or Cameron Mitchell restaurants good for \$10 off your next food purchase.

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And those who donate \$150 or more will have their names listed as Elite-Plus VIPs. The four largest Elite-Plus donors to the Buckeye Sports Bulletin VIP program will have their names listed in each issue as Wachsman Level Elite Plus donors, in honor of the late BSB assistant publisher, Karen Wachsman, and our largest donor will be designated as the Woody Level Wachsman Elite-Plus Donor.

To upgrade your existing subscription to VIP status, with all the benefits that come with that designation, go to BuckeyeSports.com/vip-memberships to pay by credit card, or call us at (614) 486-2202 during regular business hours. If readers have questions about this program, they can call the same number.

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

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game and the Buckeyes picked up 176 yards on the ground. The offensive line flexed its muscles on the last drive of the game when the Buckeyes ran out the last 5:13 of the game with 11 straight run plays. Day was impressed enough with what he saw from Hinzman to keep him as a starter on the offensive line going forward.

"After watching the film he stepped up in a big way and showed us that he can play guard, so we're going to continue to go with Carson, and we saw what we saw on film and now he's got to keep building on it," Day said.

Unlike Simmons, who is out for the season with a knee injury, Michalski will rejoin the Buckeyes at some point this season, although Day does not expect him to come back for the Northwestern game. As of now, the plan for the Buckeyes is to stick with the formula that helped the team defeat Penn State, even when Michalski makes his return.

"I think the focus will be to stick with what we've got right now because we feel like there was good synergy coming out of that game," Day said.

Against Purdue, the Buckeyes offensive line had another strong performance. Howard was sacked only once, while the team ran for 173 yards on 35 carries for a 4.9-yard average.

Downs, Igbinosun Honored After PSU Win

Ohio State gave out two Player of the

Game honors out on defense, giving the honors out to both safety Caleb Downs and cornerback Davison Igbinosun.

Downs, a midseason first-team AP All-American, earned the Defensive Player of the Game nod for the second time this season – the first being against Michigan State on Sept. 28 – grading out a champion at 95 percent.

The former Alabama SEC Freshman of the Year recorded four tackles against the Nittany Lions, but those stats were not indicative of the full impact he made at Beaver Stadium. He helped contain star Penn State tight end Tyler Warren for most of the game and seemed to be all over the field making plays, perhaps none more impressive than his shoestring tackle on running back Nick Singleton in the third quarter that turned what could have been a much longer run into just a 4-yard gain.

Igbinosun also earned the Defensive Player of the Game honor for the second time this season – the other one being against Marshall – after grading out a champion at 93 percent. The former Ole Miss transfer didn't have a perfect outing against the Nittany Lions, giving up a 21-yard completion to wideout Harrison Wallace III while simultaneously committing a holding penalty, but he stood up when it mattered most.

Igbinosun made one of the biggest plays of the game on the very next snap, taking what could have been a touchdown for Wallace off the board by deflecting the Drew Allar pass and coming away with an improbable interception to preserve a 14-10 lead for the Buckeyes at the half.

In addition to the game-changing interception, Igbinosun also added four tackles (two assisted and two solo) and had a pass breakup in the win, putting a bow on what might have been the best game of his two-year Ohio State career.

Penn State Game Draws Near-Record Audience

Ohio State's 20-13 win over Penn State on Nov. 2 drew FOX its biggest TV audience of the season with 9.94 million view-

ers. The top-three matchup surpassed FOX's previous season-high viewership of 9.19 million viewers for Texas vs. Michigan on Sept. 7.

The matchup between the Buckeyes and Nittany Lions which aired as FOX's "Big Noon Kickoff" game was fourth in viewership for the entire college football season with the Georgia vs. Texas game on Oct. 20 being the most-watched game of the season. The top-five matchup was broadcast on ABC to an average of 13.19 million viewers.

In addition to being the most-watched game on FOX this season, the Ohio State vs. Penn State game was the most-watched Big Ten game of the season, surpassing the Oregon vs. Ohio State game on Oct. 12, which had an official Nielsen rating of 9.6 million average viewers. However, across all of its platforms, including Peacock, NBC reported a 10.2 million average audience for the Ohio State vs. Oregon game.

Styles Named Semifinalist For Butkus Award

Ohio State junior linebacker Sonny Styles was named one of 15 finalists for the Butkus Award as the nation's top linebacker, the Butkus Foundation announced on Nov. 4.

Styles, who was previously named to the Butkus Award watch list this offseason, earns the honor in just his first year playing linebacker at Ohio State. After starting all of last year for the Buckeyes at safety, the Pickerington (Ohio) Central product has made a seamless transition closer to the line of scrimmage at Will linebacker, leading a stout Scarlet and Gray defense with 57 tackles (3½ for loss), along with two sacks, a pass breakup and a fumble recovery.

Styles, along with second-leading tackler and Mike linebacker Cody Simon, has helped set the tone in the middle for an Ohio State defense that ranked among the nation's best in nearly every defensive category entering Week 12 of the college football season, including first in total defense at 250.8 yards allowed per game, second

in scoring defense (10.7 points allowed per game) and sixth in rushing defense (95.2 rushing yards allowed per game).

Styles has the chance to become Ohio State's first winner of the Butkus Award – named after former two-time All-American and Pro Football Hall of Fame linebacker Dick Butkus – since his position coach James Laurinaitis took home the honor his senior year in 2007. The only other Butkus Award winner in Ohio State history is Andy Katzenmoyer in 1997.

Last season, former Ohio State linebacker Tommy Eichenberg was named a semifinalist for the award but lost out to winner Payton Wilson of NC State.

Styles will compete for the award along with 14 other top defenders representing six conferences, including Alabama's Jihad Campbell and Deontae Lawson, Clemson's Barrett Carter, Indiana's Aiden Fisher, Iowa's Jay Higgins and Texas' Anthony Hill Jr., among others.

Finalists for the Butkus Award will be named on Nov. 25 with a winner announced by Dec. 10.

Smith Named Alexander Frosh Of Year Semifinalist

Freshman wide receiver Jeremiah Smith added to his list of recognition on Nov. 6, when he was one of 12 semifinalists named to the Shaun Alexander Freshman of the Year list, which recognizes the college football freshman player of the year.

Smith, who had broken former Ohio State receiver Cris Carter's freshman receiving yards record in Ohio State's win over Penn State a few days prior to the list being revealed, is a strong candidate to win the award, which will be announced on Dec. 26.

Since the list came out, Smith also broke Carter's freshman receptions and touchdowns records in Ohio State's win over Purdue. In the blowout win, Smith had six catches for 87 yards and a touchdown. On the year, Smith has 45 receptions for 765 receiving yards and nine receiving touchdowns. His receiving yards and touchdowns are team highs.

Other conference inclusions from the list are Minnesota safeties Kerry Brown and Koi Perich, Nebraska quarterback Dylan Raiola and Penn State offensive lineman Anthony Donkoh.

Maisonneuve Wins B1G Coach Of The Year

Ohio State head men's soccer coach Brian Maisonneuve was named a unanimous Big Ten Coach of the Year selection by his conference colleagues on Nov. 8 for leading the Buckeyes to their first Big Ten regular-season title since 2015 and a No. 1 seed in the Big Ten tournament.

He is the first Buckeye coach to earn the honor since John Bluem won the last of his four Big Ten Coach of the Year awards in 2014.

Maisonneuve, a former Columbus Crew midfielder who is in his seventh season as Ohio State's head coach, helped the Buckeyes to a 2024 season in which they finished the regular season as the No. 1-ranked team in the nation with a 12-1-3 record and 7-1-2 conference mark.

Under Maisonneuve's guidance, the Buckeyes – who were just 6-6-6 and 3-4-2

Follow The Bucks Daily In Their Quest For The Playoffs

The excitement is building now that the big games with Indiana, Michigan and beyond are approaching for the Ohio State football team. There is no need to miss any of the latest news on the Buckeyes' quest for the playoffs and a national championship. The BSB staff will be reporting from every press conference or other availability throughout each week in real time at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, free to all subscribers. The discussion should also be hot and heavy on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum, where subscribers and staff members interact.

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last season – entered the Big Ten tournament among the top teams in the nation in multiple statistical categories. They finished the regular season first in shots on goal per game (7.9); third in shots per game (18.1); fifth in goal differential (42-16), points per game (7.9) and scoring offense (2.6); and tied for 22nd in shutout percentage (43.8).

He also helped a number of Buckeyes turn in career years in scarlet and gray. Eight members of the team earned post-season Big Ten honors, including senior Michael Adedokun, who was unanimously named Big Ten Midfielder of the Year after leading the league in points (27) and assists (11), and graduate and senior defenders Saggi Magnusson and Deylen Velios, who were each named first-team All-Big Ten along with Adedokun.

Junior midfielders Marko Borkovic and Luciano Pechota were named second-team All-Big Ten, while forward David Ajagbe and defender Nick McHenry earned All-Big Ten freshman team honors.

The Buckeyes will now look to win their first Big Ten tournament title since 2009

and were off to a strong start after a 3-1 win over No. 4 Washington in the second round. Ohio State advanced to take on Michigan in the Big Ten tournament championship, which was slated to be held at Ohio Stadium on Nov. 12 (3 p.m., Big Ten Network). Admission is free.

Carter Still Wants To Keep 36 Scholarship Sports

Ohio State president Ted Carter remained committed to keeping all 36 Division-I sports during his investiture ceremony held at the Greater Columbus Convention Center on Nov. 8.

“When I hired (athletic director) Ross Bjork, he and I decided right away that we would retain all 36 Division-I sports programs,” Carter said at the ceremony which officially swore him in as the university’s 17th president. “It’s important. We have over 1,000 student-athletes. It’s important for our Olympic sports that we do this.

“Not many other schools are going to be able to do this. And we will remain financially self-sufficient. That’s no small order, because we’re going to be sharing a fair bit

of our revenue with our student-athletes. And finally, we’re going to retain scholarships for all 36 Division-I sports.

“We will determine how best to do that. There’s a lot of big decisions to be made. But these decisions will help shape the conversation about how we can make sure that our student-athletes remain students first.”

Carter’s remarks – which also included him saying that college athletics is the “front porch” to the university and that he is committed to maintaining the student-athlete model – came a month after a federal judge granted preliminary approval to the NCAA vs. House settlement on Oct. 7, which is expected to allow teams to share revenue with student-athletes.

As part of a \$2.8 billion settlement of three separate antitrust cases facing the NCAA and power conferences, schools would be allowed to share 22 percent of revenue with their student athletes as early as 2025, which, according to Bjork in a Aug. 21 meeting with the board of trustees, equates to \$25 million annually for Ohio State.

In an interview with The Columbus Dispatch in August, Carter stated that some sports could look more like club sports but still compete at the Division-I level. That may be the case with the men’s gymnastics program, which, according to NBC4, will be losing its athletic scholarships while remaining a Division-I sport.

Bjork had a similar message about some of the changes that could be on the way for some of Ohio State’s non-revenue sports in an interview with BSB conducted on May 31.

“We want to keep all 36 sports,” Bjork said. “That has been very clear, but they may look different. Expectations may be different. The funding model of those sports may look different. The economic structure between the athlete and the institution may look different.

“Right now, we provide a lot of scholarships in those sports. That may look different. What that means, we don’t have all those answers yet. But we have to be thinking that way.”

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago – 1984

With Archie Griffin’s football career apparently over, the two-time Heisman Trophy winner had found how handy a college degree can be.

After playing for the Cincinnati Bengals since graduating from Ohio State in the spring of 1976, Griffin became unemployed. He talked to Jacksonville of the United States Football League as late as early October, but Griffin had not signed a contract.

The three-time All-American found himself going to work at 53 W. 11th Ave., just down the street from his old dormitory, Stradley Hall, which had been turned into an all-female residence hall.

Griffin was making use of his industrial relations degree, working in Ohio State’s employment services office since Aug. 1.

“I hope that I can be an example to someone,” Griffin said. “People are right. Sometimes a lot of athletes don’t really take the education seriously. It happened in the past, but I think that is definitely changing. Athletes are realizing now that only a certain few make professional sports.”

35 Years Ago – 1989

The Three Musketeers. The Terrific Trio. Three Amigos. Three Backs and a Cloud of Dust. Call them anything you like, but call on Ohio State running backs Carlos Snow, Scottie Graham and Dante Lee to get the job done.

The Buckeyes did just that Nov. 4.

Not since Leo Hayden, John Brockington and Rex Kern did the trick against Duke in 1970 had three Buckeyes rushed for 100 or more yards in the same game.

Snow, Graham and Lee did as Ohio State rolled up 456 yards on the ground. It was the Buckeyes’ best rushing effort since a near-record 511 yards against Northwestern in 1978.

30 Years Ago – 1994

Embarrassed. Destroyed. Wiped out. Crushed. Overpowered. Demolished. Bombed. Pulverized.

It may seem a little excessive, but all were adjectives used by one person or another to describe top-ranked Penn State’s methodical march over Ohio State Oct. 29 to the tune of 63-14 before the largest crowd ever to watch a game in State College with 97,079 in attendance.

And while the signposts in that tiny Pennsylvania town were pointed directly toward Pasadena, the road map for the Buckeyes was a little more fuzzy.

The Nittany Lions continued a drive to their first Rose Bowl appearance since 1923 and, perhaps, a third national championship to go along with the ones they captured in 1982 and 1986.

But while Penn State celebrated another huge victory, Ohio State lay in its wake, pondering the future.

“We have three more games, 21 days to see what we’re made of,” said OSU offensive coordinator Joe Hollis. “We have to bull up, do the intangibles right, coach like hell, play like hell and see where we stand.”

25 Years Ago – 1999

OSU senior cornerback and co-captain Ahmed Plummer had a week he would not soon forget leading up to and including the Oct. 30 Iowa game.

First, Plummer was named one of 12 semifinalists for the Jim Thorpe Award, given annually to the nation’s top defensive back.

Then, a day later on Oct. 28, he received word that he would receive one of 15 scholarships presented by the National Football Foundation and College Football Hall of Fame. The scholarship, for postgraduate work, was worth \$18,000.

Finally, he intercepted a pass and helped the Buckeyes dismantle Iowa 41-11 in OSU’s Homecoming game Oct. 30.

“I’m tremendously happy,” Plummer said, responding to his incredible run of good fortune.

20 Years Ago – 2004

An agreement for SBC to sponsor the Ohio State-Michigan football games in 2004 and 2005 was shot down Oct. 27, less than 48 hours after it was announced.

Although officials from Ohio State and Michigan issued statements indicating that the institutions “were close to an agreement to have SBC support the game,” both schools sent out press releases Oct. 25 indicating that the sale of the naming rights to the traditional finale, known simply as The Game to people in both states, was imminent.

The announcement, however, was met with widespread criticism from fans of both programs – probably the first time Ohio State and Michigan football fans had agreed on anything. As a result of the backlash, the schools quickly pulled out of the deal.

“We were excited about the positive impact the agreement would have (had) on the department of athletics, the university and the community,” said OSU athletic director Andy Geiger. “But as we attempted to move forward, it became apparent that this agreement could detract from the great tradition of the game itself.

“Given that possibility and the fast-approaching date of this year’s game, the two universities agreed it was in their best interest not to pursue the arrangement at this time.”

15 Years Ago – 2009

Thaddeus Gibson used to feel like a forgotten man at Ohio State. Then he became front and center for head coach Jim Tressel – on and off the field.

The junior defensive lineman was one of the Buckeyes’ top defensive weapons and was hard to miss when lined up across from an opposing offense. The 6-2, 240-pounder was also easy to pick out in Tressel’s coaching class at OSU. Gibson could be found in the front row of the class every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 7:30 a.m. in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

“I just wanted to learn more about the game,” Gibson said of taking the class. “With a great coach like Coach Tressel you can never get enough.”

Gibson was on pace to have his best season as a Buckeye. He earned Big Ten defensive player of the week honors after a six-tackle, three-sack performance Oct. 24 against Minnesota. For the season, Gibson had made 27 stops, including 9½ for a loss, with four sacks, a forced fumble and two fumble recoveries. The sack totals were one fewer than he had notched all of the previous season, and his tackles and tackles for loss were already career bests.

10 Years Ago – 2014

To make the case the Ohio State football team did not get everything it wanted out of a 49-37 soul-cleansing win at Michigan State would not be easy.

First and foremost, there was the victory itself of course. That let the No. 14 Buckeyes take control of the race for the inaugural Big Ten East Division title, but there was so much more than that.

They picked up their first top-10 win of the Urban Meyer era, and they did so at the expense of the team that had robbed them of so much the season before.

The Buckeyes also did it their way – at least when they had the ball. The Ohio State offense, which had set so many records already during the two-plus seasons since Meyer became head coach but broken down at inopportune times against some of the better competition it had faced, dictated the pace of the game, leaving in the dust a defense that was accustomed to doing that to MSU’s foes.

Ohio State’s defense came out of the game with some questions yet to answer, but there was no denying that there too the Buckeyes better represented themselves than the last time they had faced the Spartans, a 34-24 loss in the Big Ten Championship Game on Dec. 7, 2013.

Five Years Ago – 2019

The 6-4, 305-pound offensive guard Jonah Jackson had been a team captain at Rutgers the fall before but elected to pursue a graduate transfer to Ohio State after receiving his degree in criminal justice.

“I gave everything to (Rutgers), and that will forever be my alma mater,” Jackson said during his first media availability of fall camp. “That’s a place I’ll consider home. But I wanted to see what else was out there.”

Jackson was a three-star prospect from Media (Pa.) Penncrest who held scholarship offers from Albany, Massachusetts, Monmouth and Rutgers coming out of high school. But back on the market for one final season, he was being courted by big-time programs such as Ohio State and Oklahoma.

“It was just like a hailstorm at me,” Jackson said. “I was like, ‘I know where I want to go. I know the schools that get to visit.’ It was kind of a headache, the amount of people that were just blowing up your phone.”

After official visits to both schools, Jackson – who was honorable-mention All-Big Ten in 2018 – announced his decision to be a Buckeye on Feb. 25. It was a significant boost to a unit that was set to return just one starter that season in left tackle Thayer Munford.

One Year Ago – 2023

In the midst of an up-and-down offensive performance against Rutgers, quarterback Kyle McCord etched his name into the Ohio State record books by completing his 18th consecutive pass, breaking the program record for consecutive passes.

McCord completed his first 11 passes against Rutgers, which came after completing his final seven passes against Wisconsin the week prior. He finished the 35-16 win over the Scarlet Knights 19 of 26 passing for 189 yards with three touchdowns and an interception, with the record-breaking pass a 3-yard completion to TreVeyon Henderson early in the second quarter.

The record was previously held by C.J. Stroud, who completed 17 consecutive passes in Ohio State’s 56-7 win against Michigan State in 2021.

Forced Turnovers Preserve OSU's Shutout

Continued From Page 1

off an emotional win like that and then you have a letdown going into the game. We're in November now. Every single snap matters. Every play matters. It was so good to see us respond coming off an emotional win last week."

As the final score indicated, Ohio State's refusal to let down was driven by its defense, and specifically its oft-maligned defensive line.

After questionable performances against Oregon and Nebraska, many members of Ohio State's front four – particularly seniors Jack Sawyer and JT Tuimoloau – faced heavy criticism from fans and others for their inactivity in the pass and run defense. That scrutiny even stretched to the coaching staff, where there were rumors sparked of a disconnect between defensive line/associate head coach Larry Johnson and defensive coordinator Jim Knowles regarding pass-rush philosophy, one which has since been denied by Day.

Those critics were mostly silenced after the Penn State game, where the Buckeyes generated constant pressure on Drew Allar, sacking him twice, and against Purdue, it was more of the same.

Albeit against a much more inferior offensive line than the Nittany Lions' front, Ohio State's "rushmen" were a constant thorn in quarterback Hudson Card's side. It started on the very first drive of the game, when, after back-to-back positive runs by running back Devin Mockobee, Tuimoloau and linebacker Cody Simon worked together to bring Card to the ground for a loss of 10, forcing a punt two plays later.

That sack seemed to springboard the Buckeyes' pass-rushing attack the rest of the day. From there on out, Card was sacked two more times for losses of 10 and 5 and hurried on multiple occasions, all annoyances for the quarterback that forced him to complete just nine of his 19 passes for 108 yards and an interception on the day.

Day said after the game that it was Johnson's rushmen who set the tone for the defense on the day, especially his two veteran edge rushers, Sawyer and Tuimoloau.

"I thought JT and Jack were both very disruptive," Day said. "It starts up front. Anytime that happens – three sacks, getting in the backfield – it makes a big difference."

Playing without star defensive tackle Ty-leik Williams who was injured late in the Penn State game, Ohio State got production out of numerous defensive linemen on the day, with five different Buckeyes picking up at least a sack, tackle for loss or quarterback hurry. But as Day alluded to, it was the senior duo of Sawyer and Tuimoloau who led that effort.

The two five-star defensive ends combined for nine tackles, two tackles for loss, a sack and a quarterback hurry against the Boilers and came together for one of the biggest plays of the game in the third quarter when Tuimoloau burst through the Purdue backfield to strip the ball from backup tailback Reggie Love III, only for Sawyer to chase the ball down for the 11-yard scoop-and-score touchdown.

When asked about the play – which Day described as the "epitome" of Ohio State's defensive success against the Boilermakers – Sawyer said it was a special moment to combine with his fellow class of 2021 commit



SCOTT STUART

PICK ME UP – Lathan Ransom's interception in the end zone and return of 24 yards in the third quarter helped preserve Ohio State's second shutout this season.

Tuimoloau and make such an impactful play in their senior season, one which hasn't come without some trials and tribulations.

"It was special. Just give all the credit and all the glory to God," Sawyer said of the touchdown. "When I'm coming around the edge, and I see JT punch it out, I said it (in the locker room), there was no chance in hell that I was diving on that ball. I was trying to scoop and score no matter what. So it's a special play. JT made a big-time play, punching it out, and once I saw the ball I was going to get it and try to score."

"I'm not going to sit here and tell you that it's not frustrating at times when the ball is not coming your way, or for whatever reason you're not getting to the quarterback when you know you can," he added later. "It definitely frustrates you a little bit. But it's a matter of staying where you're at, being thankful for where God's put us and knowing that's going to come our way eventually. Last year, it was the same thing for a lot of us. So it's just sticking to it and showing up every day, not listening to the outside noise or negativity. That's really the main thing."

Sawyer and Tuimoloau were not the only ones who helped preserve Ohio State's second shutout of the season. Knowles' secondary also put forth a stellar performance, with a trio of cornerbacks – Jordan Hancock, Davison Igbinosun and Lorenzo Styles Jr. – recording a pass breakup and fifth-year safety Lathan Ransom coming away with an inter-

ception.

Like the scoop-and-score, Ransom's pick was one of the more important in this game, simply because it helped wipe away the Boilermakers' best chance at coming away with any points in the second half.

Purdue found itself threatening for a score at the OSU 22-yard line following a pass-interference penalty by Igbinosun – one of a handful called on the former Ole Miss transfer this season – but Ransom had other plans for the Boilers. On the very next play, Card took a shot in the end zone that found the hands of the leaping safety, who put the ball back in Ohio State's hands and returned it 24 yards to the OSU 24.

Ransom said his interception was a product of the preparation he put in during the week to learn the ins and outs of Purdue's offense and passing game, just another example of the Buckeyes not riding high following the win over the Nittany Lions.

"The couple looks (of Purdue) that we saw in practice, they were basically flooding that boundary," Ransom said. "It was multiple verticals and when I saw the inside vertical, I passed it to Jordan, and the quarterback looked for the outside one. It was just a great play, great communication."

Plays like Ransom's helped the Buckeyes secure their second shutout of the season, the other being a 56-0 win over Western Michigan on Sept. 7, a feat that seems more impressive considering before this season Ohio State had

not prevented a team from scoring in a game since 2019, with the last Big Ten shutout coming in 2017.

Purdue's inadequacy on offense and special teams may have largely contributed to the shutout, with Card throwing the previously mentioned interception and kicker Spencer Porath missing two makeable kicks from 21 and 38 yards. Regardless, those who have played enough college football know that putting zeros on the scoreboard is something to be proud of on any given day, no matter who the opponent is.

"It should be important," Ransom said of the shutout. "Being here so long, there are not many shutouts that have come along. It's super hard to pitch a shutout. Hopefully, we get a couple more throughout the season."

"It's big," Sawyer added. "They're a good football team. They missed a couple of field goals which helped us out, obviously. But it's a big game to build off of, and it's nice to see that goose egg (on the scoreboard)."

Defensive Revamp Pays Off

Just four days before shutting out Purdue, Day revealed to local media in his weekly press conference that Ohio State's defense had undergone a large makeover since giving up 496 yards and 32 points while failing to record a sack against Oregon, going so far as to say that the coaching staff "almost started from scratch" to get things back in the right direction.

"We almost, it's kind of a goofy word, but like re-engineered the defense," Day said on Nov. 5. "We had to almost start from scratch after the Oregon game. What I mean by that is not to scrap everything, but, 'OK, what are the base foundations of what we're trying to get done?'"

"Who are the best players? We have to put our best players in a position to be successful. What are teams scheming us up, in terms of what are they looking at? And you start going through that process, and you almost have to kind of knock it down and rebuild it a little bit."

As the old adage goes, Rome wasn't built – or in Ohio State's case, rebuilt – in a day, and that was shown when the defense continued to struggle some against Nebraska, allowing the Huskers to rush for 121 yards and allowing a fourth-quarter touchdown that at the time gave true freshman quarterback Dylan Raiola and the Huskers the lead.

But Knowles' unit looked the part against Penn State, rotating defensive linemen much more than usual and blitzing at a higher rate, and they took another step forward with a nearly flawless performance against Purdue, coming away with the shutout by limiting the Boilers to just 206 yards total (98 rushing, 108 passing).

Although Day declined to give out the specifics of what exactly they changed from a schematic standpoint when asked about it after the game, it does appear that the unit is trying to mix and match with their personnel to keep opposing offenses on their toes.

This is something they did often against Purdue. In addition to the added blitzing and defensive line rotation, Knowles' unit also brought the hybrid linebacker/defensive end "Jack" position back into the fray – a position that Sawyer had unsuccessfully occupied his sophomore season – giving the role this game

to both linebacker C.J. Hicks and defensive end Mitchell Melton.

The unit also operated more out of a 3-4 defensive scheme rather than Knowles' unconventional 4-2-5 system.

Day said all of these changes stemmed from the group wanting to be more unpredictable from a schematic standpoint, an aspect of the defense that has previously come under criticism by Saban, who called Ohio State's pass rush antiquated after the Oregon game.

"To the naked eye, it's not like we redid the whole thing," Day said. "But when you start from scratch, there are just certain things that you either make assumptions on or you have to make sure that you're putting the right guys in the right place. I think they know how to go win a game, but then we have to have the changeups somewhere along the game to keep people off-balance."

"Without getting too technical on it, I think that we have the right people in the right spots. I think we're getting lined up faster, getting set, getting our cleats in the ground and being more aggressive on the perimeter."

According to those on the defense, Ohio State was able to make these technical changes because of the numerous veterans they have on the unit, who can better process and adjust to the new formations and calls being made. But X's and O's aside, those within the unit also say the makeover included a major identity shift, where the group decided to simply play football first and think second.

"I think that we're just making it a lot more simple," Sawyer said when asked what has changed since the "re-engineering" of the defense. "We're getting lined up, and we're playing. We have too good of a defense not to just

line up and put the ball down and play football. So I think that you see us taking those strides because we're just making it simple for us, making the playmakers be able to make plays. And now you're seeing it growing every week."

It's still not enough growth to be content, though, according to Ransom.

"I feel like we definitely have," he said when asked if the defense has hit its stride. "But we're going to learn from mistakes we make and try to get better every week because we're not feeling content with any of our games that we play."

Howard, Offense Play Clean Game

Ohio State's defense may have stolen the show on Nov. 9 at Ohio Stadium, but the offense also showed it was ready to produce from the start, putting together a more efficient and balanced outing than the week prior.

The Buckeye offense played a sound game against Penn State on Nov. 2, but most of that efficiency came from their running game, which – led by their new patchwork offensive line of left tackle Donovan Jackson, left guard Carson Hinzman, center Seth McLaughlin, right guard Tegra Tshabola and right tackle Josh Fryar – totaled 176 yards on 40 carries (4.4 average), including 58 on their final drive of the game to close out the win.

That left the passing game to lag behind a bit against the Nittany Lions, with fifth-year Will Howard throwing a season-low 182 yards on 16 completions – albeit two of those being touchdowns – and a key early-game interception returned for a touchdown.

Howard was the first to tell the public that he didn't play his best game against the Nittany Lions, but against the Boilermakers, he put

together one of his crisper outings in scarlet and gray.

For just the second time in the last seven games, Howard did not throw an interception, completing 21 of his 26 passes (80.1 percent) for 260 yards and three touchdowns, good for an impressive passer rating of 202.8.

"He made some nice throws today," Day said of his quarterback after the game. "He took care of the football."

While his coach said that this is the type of mistake-free performance he wants to see out of Howard on a week-to-week basis this season, Howard himself was not as satisfied with his outing. He said that although there wasn't an interception on the final stat packs, there were still plenty of mistakes made that he wanted back, none more than when he slipped and fell to the ground on a third-and-3 play from the OSU 13 that could have gone for a touchdown but instead went for a loss of 10, leading to Jayden Fielding's only field goal of the day.

"I wouldn't say mistake-free," Howard said when asked about his outing. "If you look at the stats, you can say mistake-free and turnover-free, but definitely not mistake-free. There are probably five or six plays I'd like to have back. I kind of underthrew Carnell (Tate), lost my footing a couple times."

"But overall to come out of it 21 of 26, that's solid. I'm proud of how I took care of the ball today, and that's a big emphasis for us. So this is a solid performance, but not perfect by any means, and I still have a lot of stuff to clean up. That's how I like to approach these things. Never satisfied."

Regardless of how he felt about his overall performance, Howard did successfully spread

the ball around to his playmakers. Eight different Buckeyes caught passes from the veteran quarterback – including four wide receivers, two tight ends and two running backs – with his favorite target once again being the true freshman wideout Jeremiah Smith, whose 87 yards and one touchdown helped him break Cris Carter's program record for most touchdown receptions by a freshman with nine.

Whether it's Smith, Emeka Egbuka – who recorded just one catch against Purdue for 10 yards – or less-talked-about receiving targets such as Jelani Thurman (one reception for 19 yards) or TreVeyon Henderson (three for 43) catching most of his passes, Howard said the fact that he can rely on an almost double-digit number of players in the passing game is a testament to the depth the Buckeyes have on offense, one which – coupled with a revamped defense – could be a scary sight for opposing teams the rest of November.

"That means that we have everybody clicking," Howard said. "We get eight guys involved, that's huge. The twos are ready to step in when they have to, and those first guys can come out and take a break if they need it. It fires me up. That's a good sign. That means that everybody's locked in."

"There's really not much drop-off from the ones to the twos, and that's crazy to say. Our three starters are the best in the country. We have a lot of talent in that room, and I think the tight ends are doing some really good things too. It's encouraging."

"We want to be playing our best football in November, and I think today was a good step. We have to learn from some things and just keep going."

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Smith Breaks Freshman Receiving Records

For 40 years, former Ohio State legend Cris Carter possessed by far the best season by a true freshman receiver in program history, catching a school-record 41 catches for 648 yards and eight touchdowns over 12 games in 1984.

In Ohio State's 45-0 win over Purdue on Nov. 9, Jeremiah Smith officially improved upon Carter's legendary year by surpassing his single-season receptions and receiving touchdown marks.

GAME NOTEBOOK Bobby Gorbett

Smith, who had previously surpassed Carter's 648 receiving yards record in Ohio State's 20-13 win over Penn State on Nov. 2, came into the game against Purdue needing just one more receiving touchdown and three more receptions to break Carter's remaining freshman records.

Smith got out to a strong start with a 25-yard reception on quarterback Will Howard's very first pass attempt of the game in the first quarter. Early on in the second period, Smith hauled in his 41st reception of the season on a 9-yard pass from Howard to tie Carter's record. Smith broke the record with quite a bang on third-and-17 with a 16-yard reception to put the Buckeyes in position to convert a fourth-and-short just one play later.

The Boilermakers kept the Buckeyes off the field for much of the second quarter with a 13-play, 34-yard drive that expended 6:50. Eventually the Buckeye defense got off the field with a turnover on downs, allowing Smith and the offense one more chance to break one more record before halftime with 1:40 to go.

Smith and the Buckeye offense took full advantage of this opportunity with a seven-play 59-yard drive that culminated in a 17-



SCOTT STUART

BROKEN RECORD — Another game, another freshman record, or in this case, two for Jeremiah Smith who had six catches for 87 yards and a touchdown against Purdue and along the way surpassed Cris Carter's school marks for receptions (previously 41) and TDs (eight).

yard record-breaking touchdown for Smith.

Smith's ninth receiving touchdown of the season had him come free on a drag route, as the true freshman got a great release when the ball was snapped and used his speed to create separation from Boilermakers cornerback Nyland Green.

Howard's pass drove Smith toward the line of scrimmage, but Smith still had the speed to get to the sideline and run around Green on his way to the end zone.

Smith finished the game as the Buckeyes' leading receiver with six catches for 87 yards and a touchdown, bringing his total receptions for the season to 45, his total receiving yards

to 765 and his total touchdown receptions to nine. Smith, who originally made a personal goal to break the single-season freshman receiving records all the way back in January, understood the weight of his accomplishment after the game.

"It means a lot," Smith said. "It's a blessing for sure to be able to break Cris Carter's freshman records, but we have to keep it going. No stopping."

While Smith's athleticism and extraordinary hands have made him stick out in high-light videos since his arrival in Columbus, it's his maturity and mentality that make him stick out to his coaching staff and his quarterback.

"I think it's the way he carries himself," Howard said after the game of what differentiates Smith from other freshmen. "I think he runs unbelievable routes. He's fast. He's one of the fastest guys on our team. He's physical, but I think one of the biggest things about him is how he carries himself, and I know Coach (Chip) Kelly said a couple weeks ago, you couldn't tell he's an 18-year-old kid out there. He just looks like a vet. He looks like he's been doing it for a long time.

"Does he have frustrating moments? Of course, everybody does. But overall, he doesn't have missed assignments. He's always where he needs to be. He knows what's going on, and for a freshman to step into an offense like this, of this caliber, and to not skip a step, and to know what he's doing all the time, that's special, and that's, I think, what really separates him from the rest of the pack."

Smith may not act like a freshman or play like a freshman, and after his performance against Purdue, he no longer has the stats of any freshman receiver in the history of the program. But as of right now, he's perfectly fine still being a freshman.

"Not really. I still think I'm a freshman," Smith said when asked if he still goes through

things that make him feel like a freshman. "I don't really want to grow up that fast. I'm enjoying being a freshman right now. Other people might think I'm not, but I think I'm still a freshman."

Houston Earns First Start

One of the other five-stars from Ohio State's 2024 recruiting class along with Smith, defensive lineman Eddrick Houston may not be on his way to breaking single-season records. But he did make his first career start in place of injured senior defensive tackle Tyleik Williams.

Despite being a former five-star, before the season it wasn't thought that Houston would start for the Buckeyes, as he was behind a plethora of talented and experienced defensive ends such as Caden Curry, Kenyatta Jackson Jr., Kayden McDonald, JT Tuimoloau and Jack Sawyer.

But after some injuries sustained by All Big-Ten defensive tackle Tyleik Williams, Houston was moved to defensive tackle for the Penn State game. In his press conference on Nov. 5, head coach Ryan Day indicated that the plan was for the move to be a permanent one.

Against Purdue, Houston had a solid performance filling in for Williams, recording three tackles, one solo and two assisted. After the game, Day praised how the Buford, Ga., native has competed so far at his new position.

"I have to watch the film and see," Day said after the game of Houston's performance against Purdue. "He's really flashed for us, making the move from defensive end into three technique. And he has a lot of ability. He is active – you know, he's young, so he's going to have to continue to learn.

"He's going to make plays. He's going to make some mistakes, and he has to grow up quickly, because we need him. But I think his future is very, very bright here at Ohio State. I think he can be a very, very good player. And I think he can be a really dynamic three technique for us."

As Day alluded to, Houston did make a potentially critical error in the second quarter just after the Buckeyes appeared to have come up with a stop on third down after junior linebacker Sonny Styles sacked Purdue quarterback Hudson Card for a 10-yard loss.

That play was quickly negated, though, when Houston pushed down Boilermakers offensive lineman Mahamane Moussa, drawing an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty and extending the Purdue drive with an automatic first down.

"We told him it's just a dumb penalty, but he's a young guy, he's a freshman," senior defensive end Jack Sawyer said of Houston's flag. "He doesn't know yet, so he has to grow from it. That's what we told him. There's no point in jumping in his rear end because of a bad play like that. But we know that he's going to be smarter about that moving forward, and we trust him to be out there and be smart in those times."

Special Teams Make Splash Plays

There were many plays from Ohio State's 32-31 loss to Oregon that potentially kept Day up at night in the days following the game, per-

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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

Anytime a team comes out of a 60-minute fight without allowing the other team to score, that is going to be the highlight of the game. It doesn't matter whether Purdue was 8-0, 0-8 or anything in between coming into this game. Shutting out a Big Ten football team is not easy, no matter what the talent difference is. The shutout was certainly helped out by multiple missed field goals by Purdue's Spencer Porath, who missed the fourth and fifth straight field goals for the Boilermakers against the Buckeyes dating back to last season's 41-7 win. But whether those field goals went through the upright or not, the defense did its job well enough that it at least gave itself a chance for its second shutout of the season, and it ended up happening.

True freshman Eddrick Houston made his first start of his college career in place of the injured Tyleik Williams, but Ohio State didn't skip a beat when it came to the pass rush or stopping the run. The Boilermakers finished the game with just 98 rushing yards as a team, and the Buckeyes were able to accumulate four sacks, five tackles for loss and five quarterback hurries. The linebackers and secondary were also big parts of the effort as well, with Cody Simon, Sonny Styles and C.J. Hicks combining for 15 tackles, 1½ sacks, a quarterback hurry and two passes broken up while the safeties and corners had three passes broken up of their own and Lathan Ransom brought in an interception when Purdue was going for the end zone.

Now it has been three weeks in a row that the defense has shone and been able to be a very big part of the wins, coming after the team had to "start from scratch" after the Oregon game.

What Didn't Work

The offense had over 400 yards and the team had 45 points, the defense didn't give up any points, and special teams had a blocked punt that set the offense up inside the 10-yard line. There wasn't much in this game that didn't work. Anything going in this section wouldn't be a major concern moving forward and would be *extremely* nit-picky.

With that said, Davison Igbinosun had yet another pass-interference penalty. He has had a very good year defensively but has dealt with multiple penalties in the past few

weeks. Three were called on him against Nebraska, two that were accepted. He had another against Penn State before his game-changing interception, and the penalty against the Boilermakers came about midway through the third quarter on a third down, extending Purdue's drive one more play before Hudson Card threw the interception to Ransom. This isn't as much about how this play affected the game against Purdue, but rather how it is a concerning trend for the corner.

On the other hand, Jim Knowles did say earlier in the week that they are willing to give up some penalties on Igbinosun because he is a better player when he's physical, so they are going to happen. They will just have to hope that physicality doesn't come back to bite them at the worst time later on this year.

Play Of The Game

As previously mentioned, the Buckeyes were very strong defensively but began the game especially strong, forcing two quick punts by the Boilermakers. On the second drive of the game for Purdue, the Boilers went three-and-out and had to punt from just inside their own end zone.

Immediately when the ball was snapped, Caden Curry came shooting off the left side of the line on the defensive end and remained untouched to get straight to Purdue punter Keelan Crimmins, thanks in large part to the two other Buckeye rushers from the same side, making it impossible for one Boilermaker to block all three of them.

Curry was the one who was able to finish the play that Ransom said they had planned for this game, reaching into the air and knocking the punt straight up and into the hands of Purdue senior fullback Ben Furtney. That blocked punt set the Buckeyes up at the Purdue 8-yard line in a scoreless game, giving them four plays to find their way into the end zone by way of a Will Howard rush on fourth down. It set the tone for the game and was a welcome sight for anyone who had been keeping track of the Ohio State special teams problems in the past few years.

— Greg Wilson

haps none more so than an irregular special teams play in the second quarter.

An unsportsmanlike conduct penalty allowed the Ducks to kick from midfield, and intentional or not, the team employed an onside kick of sorts that ricocheted off the hands of sophomore safety Caleb Downs. Oregon recovered the live ball and scored three points on the ensuing drive.

The costly mistake was one of the differences in the game, as the Buckeyes lost by just one point, but it may have played a part in driving the Buckeyes to be aggressive themselves on special teams against Purdue.

In the blowout win, the Buckeye special teams featured a new returner in senior running back TreVeyon Henderson, a familiar face at punt returner in Brandon Inniss, and some aggressiveness in pressuring the opposing punter.

"We put a lot of work into it, I mean, a lot of work, so we need to start seeing results," Day, one of several Buckeye coaches in charge of the special teams, said on if the special teams were trying to create more game-changing plays. "We did make a few adjustments. You saw TreVeyon back there on kickoff return. We didn't quite get what we wanted there. We've used Caleb and Brandon back there on return."

"You saw a couple of guys run down a little bit different on kickoff. Denzel (Burke) was a jammer for us today. So we're moving some pieces around to try to put our best guys out there on special teams, because we work at it. We work at it. Maybe we haven't always had as many opportunities. In the last few weeks we've seen a lot of punts, and we haven't really had an opportunity to return them. We put a lot of work into it."

Although the return game was quiet with

only one recorded return from Henderson, an 18-yard kick return to start the second half, the added aggressiveness toward Purdue punter Keelan Crimmins resulted in perhaps the play of the game in the first quarter.

With Purdue punting deep in its own territory on fourth-and-9 from its own 13-yard line, the Buckeyes ambushed Purdue's punt shield formation with powerful defensive ends Curry and Mitchell Melton.

The Boilermakers' two-man shield of rush end Reggie Love III (5-11, 215) and fullback Ben Furtney (6-0, 240) was overwhelmed, and Curry's outstretched hand was positioned squarely in the way of Crimmins' punt. After Curry severely disrupted the ball flight, Furtney recovered the ball but couldn't advance it past the Boilermakers' own 8-yard line, giving the Buckeyes a golden opportunity to score the first points of the game.

According to Day, the Buckeyes were aware of a potential vulnerability in Purdue's shield before the game.

"We liked the matchup with those guys on the shield," Day said. "When you look at the shield, they were a little bit smaller body types. We felt like if we got them to move their feet, then we had a chance to go after it. We thought both Caden and Mitch do that for a living. They can rush the passer, and then they slithered their way through the shield and at the very least put pressure on it."

"But we felt like that was a good matchup with those bigger body types on the shield. Usually we have smaller guys that are on punt return, but we felt this was the good matchup. We've been working on it for a couple weeks, and it was good to see it hit early in the game."

Day's gamble paid off four plays later when Howard rammed into the end zone from the 1-yard line. The big play from Curry wasn't

just paramount in the Buckeyes quickly putting points on the board but also generated a palpable buzz for the rest of the team.

"Extremely important," Ohio State fifth-year safety Lathan Ransom said of the value of the blocked punt. "Coach Day made a big emphasis that we needed special teams to make some plays, especially this week. We went in there and had a couple of different block punt looks. Caden Curry going in there and making the play, and executing it perfectly, like we drew it up to be. I always get excited about blocked punts. That definitely gets the team going."

Henderson Versatile In OSU Win

Henderson may not have had the day he wanted as a returner, but as one of two primary Buckeye running backs, he was one of the best players on the field.

In a tie for a season-low six carries, Henderson gained 85 rushing yards for a season-high average of 14.2 yards per carry. This only added to what was an impressive 7.0 yards per carry average on the year that was up to 7.5 after the game, which, so far, is a career best for the senior.

Henderson first showed the toughness, strength and balance that fueled his team-leading performance at the end of the first quarter. On second-and-10 with the Buckeyes leading 7-0, Henderson broke a tackle two yards past the line of scrimmage, found the hole, and nearly lost his balance before bouncing off a Purdue defender and falling forward for the first down and a 12-yard gain.

On the Buckeyes' next touchdown drive, Henderson had another long run of 16 yards that powered the offense for a first down, but he also showed his willingness to do the little

things as a pass-blocker.

On Smith's 17-yard touchdown grab, the Boilermakers attempted to put pressure on Howard with a six-man blitz. But Purdue's pressure package was stuffed in large part because of a great block from Henderson.

"Then obviously the third down they came with zero pressure," Day said of the Buckeyes' third touchdown. "I think Tre did a great job of picking it up, and then (Howard) found his hot answer right there. So those are the things that are important."

Although Kelly deserves a lot of the credit for Henderson's next chunk play on the ground, a 29-yard run in the third quarter where Henderson went 7 yards beyond the line of scrimmage before facing contact, Henderson shrugged off a Purdue defender and carried another for the last 8 yards to get his offense in the red zone.

The very next play, Henderson flashed his speed and physicality as he narrowly avoided a Purdue defender a few yards behind the line of scrimmage before barreling through a pair of Boilermakers near the sideline to score his first touchdown since the Marshall game, while giving the Buckeyes a comfortable 31-0 advantage.

Up to that point, the only aspect of the game Henderson hadn't really impacted was as a pass-catcher, and that changed the very next possession. Lined up as a receiver on a first-and-10 play from the Purdue 42, Henderson looked every bit like a wideout when he executed a double move on Purdue linebacker Kydran Jenkins to perfection to haul in a 32-yard pass from Howard, the fifth-year's longest completion of the game.

Henderson finished the game as the Buckeyes' third-leading receiver with three receptions for 43 yards.

BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 45, Purdue 0

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on how many weapons the Buckeyes have on offense and senior wide receiver Emeka Egbuka having just one catch: "There are a lot of reasons to go no-huddle; there are a lot of reasons to huddle. And when we're huddling, we're not getting as many plays. We ended up with 66 plays, and then our starters are pretty much out in the fourth quarter. So there just aren't as many plays as there used to be. So a big part of this season is understanding that the touches, the numbers, are not always going to be as high as maybe in the past. Guys like Emeka and Carnell, they understand that, and it's not always easy. You want to have an impact on the game, but their time is coming. These big games are coming as we continue to move through November, and we're going to need them to play at a high level."

Day on Egbuka scoring a touchdown on his only catch: "It was good to see Emeka get that touchdown. But he's a guy who certainly wants more touches. Any receiver does, but he's not a guy that is going to be selfish and make it about him. He knows the bigger picture on this. He's a captain, one of the best receivers in the history of Ohio State football, and I know the fans appreciate who he is."

Fifth-year quarterback Will Howard on his touchdown pass to senior tight end Gee Scott Jr.: "It's really just kind of a reverse throw-back, and we have the running back gets out on a little wheel route, and that was kind of how we ran it this week, and then Gee's kind of bluffing, and he's working through the line, acting like he's blocking and getting out. That's usually what pops open on that play. They ran with the running back, they saw that. Then, I just kind of had to be patient and wait. I was kind of sitting there, like this is taking a little while, but then all of a sudden, he popped loose."

Scott on his perspective of his touchdown catch: "The whole goal on that is to keep low pads, and everything should look like run play. I actually ended up getting delayed coming out of it even more. I tried to leave it even a little earlier, but there was another support player that kind of cut up, so I had to work through some traffic and ended up popping open late."

Scott on how he has taken steps forward as a blocker: "There are a lot of things that go into blocking, but I think ultimately it comes

down to one, your technique, and then that takes years of development, but secondly, and equally as important, is mindset. It's very similar to rebounding the basketball on the basketball court. It's a choice. And I think having the servant leadership that I believe that I've been able to develop in my time here at Ohio State, oftentimes a big block to spring a big run for my teammate feels better than my own success scoring a touchdown."

Howard on whether his internal clock in the pocket has changed as the Buckeyes' offensive line has due to injuries: "Really my internal clock hasn't changed. That's not something I'm thinking about. I'm not like, 'Oh shoot, that's (senior offensive lineman Donovan Jackson) out there, and not (senior left tackle Josh Simmons).' I'm not worried about that at all, I have the utmost confidence in those guys, and there were a couple times today where I – like on that two-minute drive, I cannot take that sack there, I have to throw that ball away, and then the other one where I just freaking fell on my face in the backfield, that's on me. They took – I took two sacks that probably they should not have counted as sacks for those guys, and I feel bad for them, because it goes on their record, but I'll get it back."

Freshman wide receiver Jeremiah Smith on if he has any more personal goals he hasn't reached this season after breaking Cris Carter's freshman receiving records: "Personal goals, no, not really. Next, it's just win the Big Ten championship, win the natty."

Smith on if not scoring a touchdown against Penn State – the first time in his college career he went without a score – motivated him coming into the win over Purdue: "That didn't really motivate me. I could have gotten into the end zone, I just made a mistake. That's all that goes into it. It wasn't really motivation for me. I just know what I'm going to go out there and do every week and do my best and get into the end zone for sure every week."

Purdue head coach Ryan Walters on his decision to kick the 21-yard field goal rather than go for six points when the Buckeyes had a 7-0 lead: "We wanted to get points on the board and come away with some momentum. We thought it would be an easy chip shot to guarantee some points. Obviously, in hindsight, you would have loved to get points there."

Day on how important junior defensive end Caden Curry's blocked punt was for this game and special teams going forward: "It also is good when you emphasize making a difference in special teams. You heard me talk about that this week. I think somebody asked me in the press conference, and I agreed with him. It wasn't a plus for us, and so that was the challenge. So to get that punt block is good. It's good for the momentum. Meetings will be sharper, walk-throughs will be sharper, practice will be sharper when you see the impact you can have on the game."

Fifth-year safety Lathan Ransom on what it takes to be able to block a punt: "You'd be surprised. All it takes is one misstep, one second off and your chance to block it goes away. So for us to execute, it takes a lot of practice. It takes a lot of great execution. I think Caden and (redshirt senior Mitchell Melton) did a great job on the front side doing that."

Ransom on what happened on his interception: "I actually can't wait to go see (defensive coordinator Jim) Knowles. It's a play I messed up in scouts this past week. I messed up on it. He had a lot to say to me so I can't wait to go talk to him, and I'm glad he showed me that play a couple times. We got it fixed."

Senior defensive end Jack Sawyer on whether he gets to keep the ball he scooped and scored: "I don't know, that's a good question. I didn't see the football. I'm going to have to get one. I'll have to talk to Coach Day about that. He'll probably get a call (from me) later tonight, to see where that ball is at."

Sawyer on if he's looking forward to playing at Wrigley Field on Nov. 16: "It's a historical ballpark, and growing up playing baseball – my grandpa played pro ball for the Pirates, so it's going to be pretty cool. I'm excited about that. I've been excited about that since they announced that."

Walters on how he felt about the loss to Ohio State: "When you play against the No. 2 team in the country, and you don't come away with any points in the red area, you allowed a blocked punt while you're backed up, you have a fumble returned for a touchdown and you go 2-for-12 on third downs, you're not going to give yourself a chance to win at the end of the game. It's disappointing."

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Special Plays Prevail In Rout Of Boilermakers

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State deserved its second shutout of the season but got help from woeful Purdue's special teams in the 45-0 victory at Ohio Stadium on Nov. 9.

Will Howard threw for three touchdowns, rookie wide receiver sensation Jeremiah Smith set two more team records, and the defense chipped in with several big plays on a 56-degree afternoon.

The Buckeyes (8-1, 5-1) took a 21-0 half-time lead with the aid of a blocked punt that led to the first score and a goal-line stand that resulted in a missed field goal by the Boilermakers (1-8, 0-6) that keyed a second TD before a crowd of 103,463.

Defensive end Jack Sawyer added a scoop-and-score in the third quarter, and the Boilermakers, losers of eight straight, missed another late field goal and the Buckeyes recorded their first Big Ten shutout in seven years.

Block O

Purdue started from the 25 after the opening kickoff and gained a first down, but the drive stalled thanks to a 10-yard sack by Cody Simon and JT Tuimoloua, and the Buckeyes took over at their 6 after a 51-yard punt by Keelan Crimmins.

The Buckeyes also made a first down off a 25-yard reception by Smith but a third-down pass from the 40 was dropped by Gee Scott Jr., and Joe McGuire lofted a 48-yard punt to the 12.

The Boilermakers' second series ended in disaster when a punt from the 13 was blocked by Caden Curry and recovered by Purdue at the 8.

It took four plays, but the Buckeyes went up 7-0 at 6:02 on a 1-yard run by Howard. Quinshon Judkins gained 2, Howard rolled right for 4 to the 2, and he ran again for 1. On fourth down, he faked a handoff to Judkins and followed him through the right side of the line for the six.

Purdue responded with a strong drive from its 25 of running and passing to reach a first-and-goal from the 5 but came away with nothing after holding the ball for 5:50 when Spencer Porath missed right on a 21-yard field goal with 12 seconds left in the quarter.

Devin Mockobee had consecutive runs of 9, 7, and 11, and quarterback Hudson Card ran 12 yards to the OSU 31. He followed with completions of 15 and 11 to the 5.

On first down, Sonny Styles blocked a pass attempt. Mockobee rushed for 2 before Card threw incomplete on the right side of the end zone to Jahmal Edrine and the Boilermakers opted to try for three points.

Ohio State then made it 14-0 at 8:30 of the second period when Scott had a 15-yard TD catch at the end of an 80-yard, 13-play, 6:42 drive.

Early on, TreVeyon Henderson ran for 12, and the Buckeyes later got out of trouble when Smith, on a third-and-17 from the OSU 40, gathered a 16-yard pass that was originally ruled a first down but changed to a yard shy after a review.

Howard used a sneak to gain the yard and a new set of downs. Later, he carried for

5 and 12 yards to the 15. On first down, he rolled right and threw back to Scott at the 13 for the easy score from there.

On Purdue's next possession, Card was sacked by Styles for a 10-yard loss to the Purdue 42 to set up a fourth-and-17, but Eddrick Houston of Ohio State was flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct after the play to give the Boilermakers a first down at the OSU 43.

No harm, other than time off the clock, was done when on fourth-and-3 from the 36, Jordan Hancock and Jack Sawyer sacked Card for 5 yards with 1:40 left until the break.

That led to Smith's 17-yard touchdown reception for a 21-0 score with 27 seconds left.

Henderson ripped off a 16-yard gain to start things, Smith made a catch for 9 and Judkins ran for 15 to the 19. On the next play, Howard took a 9-yard sack, but Smith's catch got 11 back, and on third down, Smith caught the pass at the 15 and sprinted into the end zone. The series went 59 yards, using 1:13.

The TD was Smith's ninth to break the OSU freshman record set by Cris Carter in 1984.

Smith entered the game needing three receptions to break Carter's first-year mark of 41, and he surpassed that in the first half. Meanwhile, Howard completed 11 of 14 for 121 yards.

Finishing Touches

OSU received the ball to start the second half and settled for a 42-yard field goal by Jayden Fielding to make it 24-0 at 8:34 despite running 13 plays and chewing up 6:21.

Jelani Thurman opened the drive with a 19-yard grab, and Carnell Tate had one for 14 yards and another for 12 to the 20. The momentum stalled on third-and-3 from the 13 when Howard started to run but slipped for a 10-yard loss.

Purdue moved into OSU territory after the kickoff on a Jaron Tibbs catch good for 28 yards to the 40. On fourth-and-6 from the 36, Davison Igbinosun took his obligatory pass-interference penalty, giving the Boilermakers new life at the OSU 22, but Lathan Ransom on the next play made an interception 2 yards deep in the end zone and returned it to the 24.

A completion to Brandon Inniss gained 17, and Henderson rambled down the left side for 29 before going right for the final 19 and the score off the ensuing snap to make it 31-0 at 3:07. It took five plays and 2:36 to go 76 yards.

Just eight seconds later, it was 38-0 when JT Tuimoloua forced a fumble by Reggie Love III at the Purdue 20 and Sawyer picked it up and scored from the 11.

After a Purdue punt, Emeka Egbuka's only catch of the game was a 10-yard TD 55 seconds into the fourth quarter to cap a 74-yard, six-play, 2:58 drive.

Tate had a 17-yard catch to the Purdue 42 to end the third quarter. Henderson hauled in a 32-yarder before the toss to Egbuka.

Purdue tried to spoil the Buckeyes' bid for a second shutout this season (56-0 vs. Western Michigan), but Porath missed a 38-



SCOTT STUART

RUNNING FOR DAYLIGHT — TreVeyon Henderson led Ohio State in rushing against Purdue with 85 yards on six carries, including a 19-yard touchdown.

yard field goal to the left with 9:50 remaining.

That's when Devin Brown replaced Howard for one drive and the start of another before freshman Julian Sayin entered at QB with under five minutes left. Sayin ran for 19 yards on his first snap, but the Buckeyes turned the ball over on downs.

Purdue had one more crack to score, but Curry stopped QB Ryan Browne 3 yards short of a first on fourth down, ending at the OSU 37 with 1:51 left, and Sam Williams-Dixon rushed three times for 9 yards to end the game at the 46.

Sawyer was excited by the shutout.

"It's big. I think we have a lot that we can improve on too from that game," he said. "They're a good football team. They missed a couple of field goals, too, which helped us out, but this is a good game to build off of. It's just nice to see that goose egg."

Howard was 21 of 26 for 260 yards. Smith had six catches for 87 yards, all in the first half.

Notes

Henderson ran for 85 yards on six carries. Judkins had 32 yards on 11 carries. ... Tate's six catches went for 56 yards. ... Sayin was 0 for 4 passing while Brown was incomplete on his only attempt. ... Hudson was 9 of 19 for 108 yards, and Mockobee produced 73 yards on 13 carries. ... The Buckeyes had 433 yards (260 passing, 173 rushing). Purdue gained 206 (108 passing, 98 rushing). ... OSU had four sacks for 32 yards, the Boilermakers 1 for 9. ... Simon led OSU with six tackles (two solo) and Tuimoloua had 1½ TFLs. ... The last time Ohio State blocked a punt was by Ransom on Nov. 19, 2022, at Maryland.

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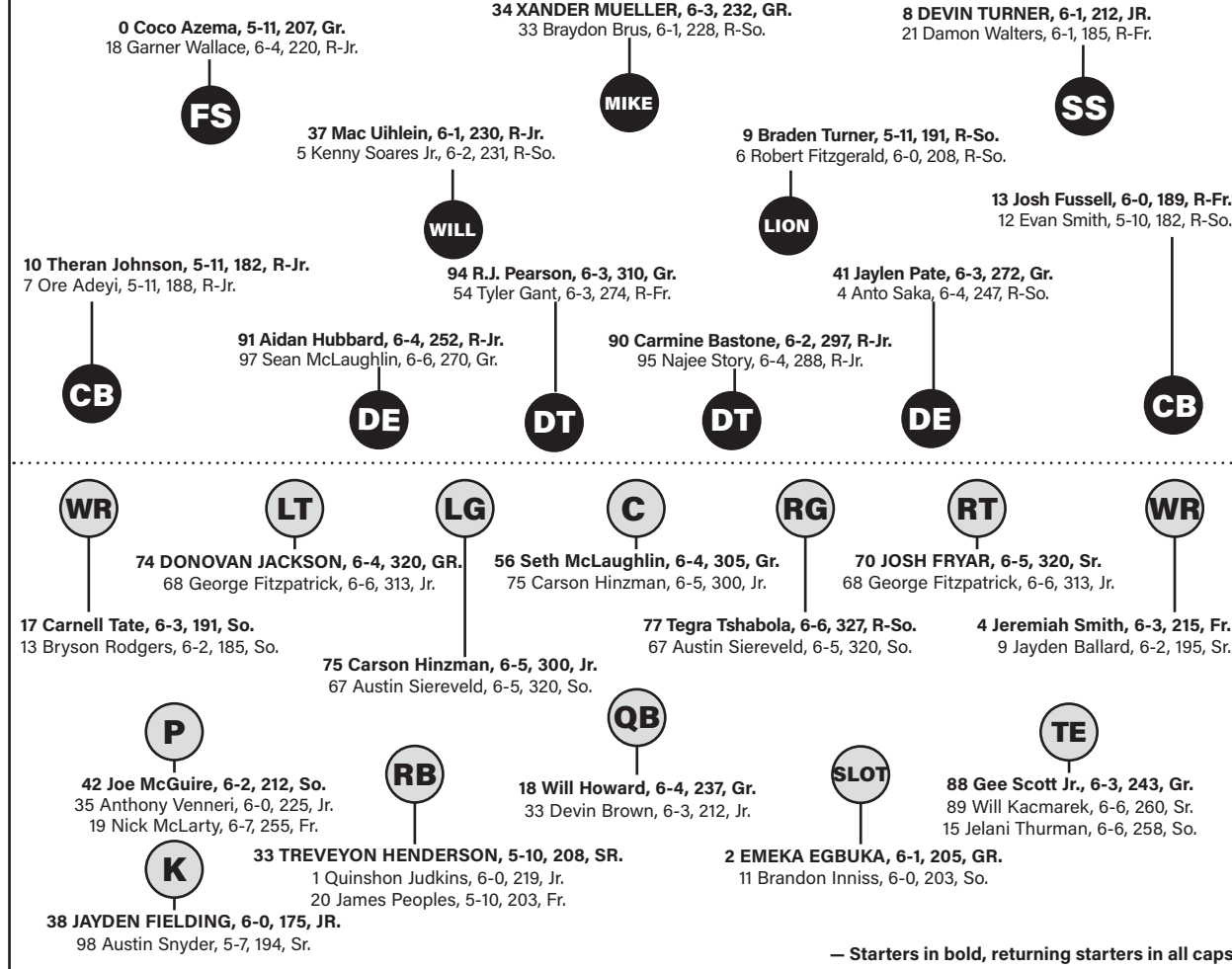
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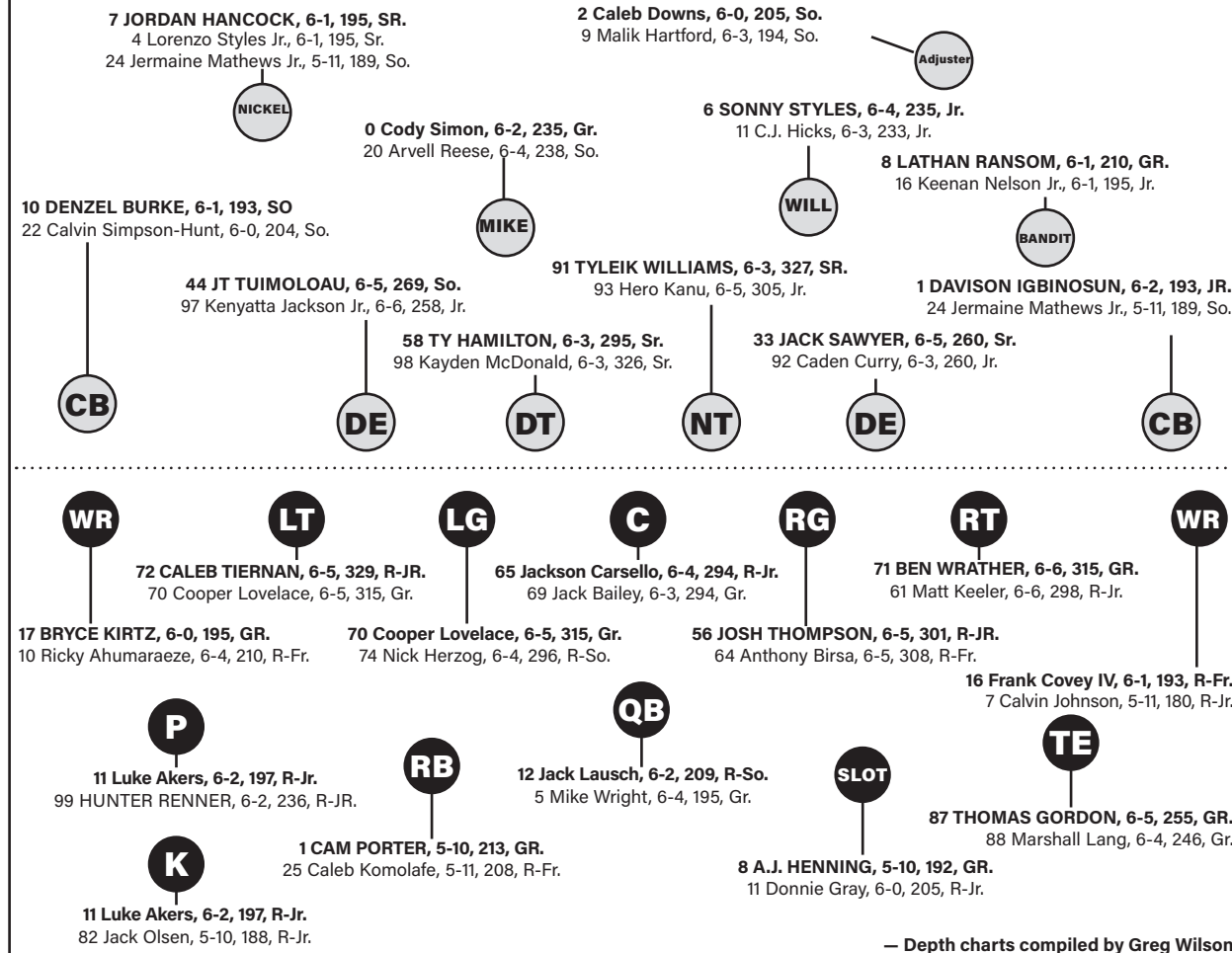


Projected Depth Charts

WHEN OHIO STATE HAS THE BALL...



WHEN NORTHWESTERN HAS THE BALL...



How We See It

OHIO STATE RUSH OFFENSE vs.
NORTHWESTERN RUSH DEFENSE

The Buckeyes rushed for 173 yards and a decent 4.9 yards per carry against Purdue, but the numbers are deceiving. With a makeshift offensive line for the second straight game, the running game was sporadically effective. TreVeyon Henderson ran for 85 yards on just six carries for a hefty 14.2 average. He had a long of 29 and a 19-yard touchdown. However, Quinshon Judkins found the yards harder to come by with 32 yards on 11 totes for a disappointing 2.9 average. Even more telling was it took four runs from the 8-yard line to score the first TD in the 45-0 win over the Boilermakers. Northwestern's run defense is a solid 19th nationally, allowing 108.1 yards per game. Of course, that's partially due to a porous pass defense being enticing. The Wildcats have given up 11 touchdowns on the ground. Against Purdue in their last game on Nov. 2, the Boilermakers gained 47 yards on 23 carries (2.0). In terms of total defense, the Wildcats rank 51st (349.2). **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

NORTHWESTERN RUSH OFFENSE vs.
OHIO STATE RUSH DEFENSE

Running the ball is not a forte of the Wildcats, ranking 115th of 133 teams with a 112.1 average and 11 scores. Cam Porter is the leading rusher with 387 yards (4.0) and six touchdowns, but he was held to 17 yards on 11 totes (1.5) vs. Purdue, although he did have a 1-yard TD in the 26-20 overtime win. Joseph Himon II had a healthy 78 yards, including a 51-yarder, on a 13.0 average vs. the Boilermakers and for the season has 230 yards (5.2). While Purdue ran for only 98 yards for a 2.6 average against the Buckeyes, Devin Mockobee rushed for 73 yards with a 5.6 average. Jack Sawyer had a scoop and score off a fumble by Reggie Love III. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

OHIO STATE PASS OFFENSE vs.
NORTHWESTERN PASS DEFENSE

Eight Buckeyes caught the 21 completions from Will Howard, who had only five incompletions but no interceptions for his 260 yards. Jeremiah Smith (six catches for 87 yards and a touchdown, all in the first half) continues to set OSU freshman receiving records even though he doesn't act like one. Carnell Tate had 56 yards from six catches, and most impressively the Buckeyes didn't need an unusually quiet Emeka Egbuka, whose one catch went for a 10-yard TD early in the fourth quarter. This is Northwestern's downfall. The Wildcats are 101st against the pass (241.1) with 11 TDs. Theran Johnson had an 85-yard pick-six vs. Iowa. He has two of the team's seven interceptions, and his 10 pass breakups put him in the top five in the Big Ten. Three Purdue throwers combined to go 25 of 41 for 290 yards and a touchdown without an interception vs. the Wildcats. Northwestern has 19 sacks, their most through nine games since 2016. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

NORTHWESTERN PASS OFFENSE vs.
OHIO STATE PASS DEFENSE

Having so many rankings in triple digits is not good. The pass offense is 118th (176.0), total offense is 129th (288.1) and the Wildcats are No. 122 in scoring (19.2). Jack Lausch was named the starter for the third game and has completed 53.6 percent of his 192 passes for 1,120 yards with five touchdowns against four interceptions. He was 23 of 35 for 250 yards and a TD vs. Purdue. The Wildcats have allowed 12 sacks this season. Lathan Ransom had an interception vs. Purdue, and the Buckeyes limited Purdue to only 108 yards through the air while registering four sacks. It was an efficient performance. **EDGE: OHIO STATE**

SPECIAL TEAMS

Finally, an area where the Wildcats excel. They have blocked two field goals and one punt and rank among the best in punt returns (14.2) in the conference with Drew Wagner having a 72-yarder for a touchdown vs. Iowa. Northwestern also averages 25.0 yards per kickoff return. Two Wildcats kickers have combined to make 13 of 19 field goals with a long of 46. Caden Curry vs. Purdue got the Buckeyes' first blocked punt in two years. **EDGE: EVEN**

INTANGIBLES

This is Northwestern's World Series, if you will, at the friendly confines of Wrigley Field. The atmosphere will be eccentric and electric. This will actually help the Buckeyes remain focused on the task at hand instead of possibly looking ahead to undefeated Indiana. **EDGE: NORTHWESTERN**

STAFF PREDICTION

There may be wind and rain. There may be chilly conditions, but this edition of the Buckeyes should be suited for a ground attack if necessary. If this game were at a normal football venue with pleasant weather, the Buckeyes would win by at least 40. It could be a bit closer. **OHIO STATE 42, NORTHWESTERN 10**

Northwestern Working Through Rebuild

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

When Pat Fitzgerald was fired by Northwestern shortly before the 2023 season due to a hazing scandal that happened on his watch, there wasn't a lot of hope that the Wildcats would be able to do much with their campaign, especially after a 1-11 record in the 2022 season, which was tied for the worst in the country.

But David Braun took over the program as interim head coach and led the team to eight wins and a 14-7 win over Utah in the Las Vegas Bowl, allowing him to lose the interim tag along the way and earn Big Ten Coach of the Year.

It was one of the bigger surprises of the college football season that he was able to lead the team to eight wins after not being sure whether he would still have a job after Fitzgerald was fired.

"It's this really unique balance of what an incredible responsibility, and there's a sense of challenge and excitement about that," Braun said in the offseason "But in the circumstances, there was a huge part of you that's just sitting there going, 'Well, what does the next six months look like? We just uprooted our family from a dream job at North Dakota State. Are we moving again in six months? What does this look like?' It was such a cluster of varying emotions."

One of the biggest reasons Braun and the Wildcats were able to outperform expectations last season was their turnover margin. The offense lost just one fumble the entire season, and after three interceptions in their first three games, they threw just five in the remaining 10 contests. When adding together their nine total interceptions and single fumble last year, they finished the season third in the nation in turnover margin.

That isn't something this year's team has been able to keep up, already turning the ball over 11 times compared to just nine the entire 2023 season, which has them off to a 4-5 record (2-4 Big Ten) before the No. 2-ranked Buckeyes head to Chicago to face off against them in Wrigley Field on Nov 16.

The game is taking place in the home of the Chicago Cubs because the Wildcats began literally rebuilding over the offseason, demolishing Ryan Field to build it back up, having it ready for the beginning of the 2026 season. That rebuild has also translated on the field with Northwestern losing some important pieces of the 2023 team to the transfer portal.

After having a solid defense last season, the Wildcats lost three cornerbacks to the portal, departures that have played a large part in the team's passing defense regression so far in 2024. Northwestern has given up 241.0 passing yards per game through Week 11, which ranks 99th in the country, a far cry from its 15th-best 182.9 yards per

Get To Know ... Northwestern

• **2024 Record:** 4-5, 2-4 Big Ten.

Team Information: Offensive Formation – Spread; Defensive Formation 4-3; Starters Returning – Offense 7, Defense 2, Specialists 1.

Head Coach: David Braun, 2nd year at Northwestern, 12-10.

Series History: 78th meeting; Ohio State leads 63-13-1.

School Facts: Location – Evanston, Ill.; Enrollment – 22,732; Nickname – Wildcats; Colors – Purple, White; Conference – Big Ten; Stadium – Ryan Field (Surface – Grass; Capacity – 47,130).

2024 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result (ET)
Aug. 31	MIAMI (OHIO)	W, 13-6
Sept. 7	DUKE	L, 26-20
Sept. 14	EASTERN ILLINOIS	W, 31-7
Sept. 21	at Washington	L, 24-5
Oct. 5	INDIANA	L, 41-24
Oct. 11	at Maryland	W, 37-10
Oct. 19	WISCONSIN	L, 23-3
Oct. 26	at Iowa	L, 40-14
Nov. 2	at Purdue	W, 26-20 (OT)
Nov. 16	OHIO STATE*	Noon
Nov. 23	at Michigan	TBA
Nov. 30	ILLINOIS*	TBA

* game at Wrigley Field

Top Offensive Players

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD
Cam Porter	97	387	4.0	6
Joseph Himon II	44	230	5.2	2
Jack Lausch	61	218	3.6	1

Passing	Comp-Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT
Jack Lausch	103-192	53.7	1,120	5-4

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD
A.J. Henning	40	426	10.7	3
Bryce Kirtz	27	414	15.3	0
Thomas Gordon	18	183	10.2	0
Cam Porter	18	127	7.1	0
Frank Covey IV	10	98	9.8	0
Joseph Himon II	13	91	7.0	1

Team Offensive Stats

Points Per Game – 19.2
 Rushing Yards Per Game – 112.1
 Passing Yards Per Game – 176.0
 Total Offense Avg. Per Game – 288.1

Top Defensive Players

Def. Leaders	Solo	Asst.	Tot.	TFL-Yards	Sacks
Mac Uihlein	39	20	59	3.5-17	2-13
Theran Johnson	34	10	44	2.5-8	0-0
Xander Mueller	23	20	43	3.0-3	1-1
Robert Fitzgerald	27	10	37	0-0	0-0
Devin Turner	25	11	36	1-2	0-0
Braden Turner	25	5	30	1-1	0-0
Coco Azema	22	7	29	1-3	0-0

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	TD
Theran Johnson	2	85	42.5	1
Damon Walters	1	33	33	0
Coco Azema	1	12	12	0

Team Defensive Stats

Points Per Game Allowed – 21.9
 Rushing Yards Per Game Allowed – 108.2
 Passing Yards Per Game Allowed – 241.0
 Total Offense Avg. Per Game Allowed – 349.2

game last year.

Taking the starting jobs at cornerback have been Theran Johnson, Josh Fussell and nickel Braden Turner.

Johnson has been a big part of the defense with 44 tackles – second most on the team – along with 2½ tackles for loss, 10 pass breakups and two interceptions, one of which he returned for a touchdown. Turner has accumulated 30 tackles and one for loss while also breaking up one pass and recovering one fumble, while Fussell has 23 tackles with three passes broken up.

Devin Turner – no relation to Braden – and Coco Azema will be on the field at safety against Ohio State, a unit that is coached by former Michigan State interim head coach Harlon Barnett. Devin has totaled 36 tackles (one for loss), an interception and three passes broken up. He is the only returning starter for the Wildcats in the secondary but hasn't been able to lead the unit to much success. Azema comes into the game with 29 tackles (one for loss), an interception and a pass broken up.

Overall, the Wildcats' defense has been near average – ranking 39th in the nation and 11th in the Big Ten in scoring defense at 21.9 points allowed per game – but one of the brighter spots has been linebacker Xander Mueller, who missed the last two games due to a lower-body injury but should be able to return for the game in Wrigley with an extra week of rest after their 26-20 overtime win over Purdue on Nov. 2. Braun has been very complimentary of his third-team All-Big Ten linebacker throughout the season.

"I get the opportunity to talk to pro scouts almost every day about Xander," Braun said. "Those are such fun conver-

sations because all I have to do is tell the truth. I always preface that I'm not overselling, I'm telling you what I experience every day: his consistency, his energy, his passion.

"He has humility and a heart of service in a day and age of college football when it's becoming more and more about what's in it for me. Xander Mueller is the ultimate team player."

He is joined at linebacker in the Wildcats' 4-2-5 defense by Mac Uihlein, who – because of Mueller's two-game absence – leads the team with 59 tackles. Uihlein has 3½ tackles for loss, two sacks, a forced fumble and one pass breakup compared to Mueller's 43 stops, three tackles for loss, one sack, one fumble recovery and four passes broken up.

If Mueller's recovery from his injury takes longer than expected, Kenny Soares Jr. or Braydon Brus would be in line to earn more playing time against the Buckeyes, the two of them coming in with a combined 23 tackles this season.

The front four for the Wildcats of Aidan Hubbard and Jaylen Pate on the edges and R.J. Pearson and Carmine Bastone on the interior has been effective at stopping the run, at 16th in the nation giving up 108.2 yards per game on the ground. That number was helped out when the Wildcats held the Boilermakers to just 47 yards rushing on 23 carries (2.0 average) in Week 10, but it has been the relative strength of the team this year.

But the downfall of this year's Northwestern team has been the offense. It has been one of the worst in the country in both total offense (288.1 yards per game, 131st) and scoring offense (19.2 points per game, 120th) through nine games.

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OHIO STATE VS. NORTHWESTERN

When an offense isn't playing well, the first place to look is the quarterback, a position that has been an issue for the Wildcats this season.

Jack Lausch has yet to provide an answer for the struggling offense with 1,120 yards passing in seven games (160.0 per game), completing 103 of 192 throws for five touchdowns to four interceptions.

Brendan Sullivan seemed to be the top choice at quarterback before the season, but after Braun refused to name a starter at the end of spring ball, Sullivan decided to transfer, ending up at Iowa, where he led the Hawkeyes to a 40-14 win over his former team on Oct. 26, helping them score 28 points in the third quarter. But Braun noted after the game that his team's issues stretch way beyond him not naming a starter early in the offseason.

"A poor performance, in all three phases," Braun said. "That was an embarrassing loss, an embarrassing performance, an embarrassing second half. Our only issues aren't at quarterback. They're everywhere."

Regardless, the 176.0 yards through the air the Wildcats are getting – which ranks 119th in the nation and 16th in the Big Ten – hasn't been cutting it for the offense, and there has been speculation that they are not far from making a replacement at the position and putting Mississippi State transfer Mike Wright in. Wright has played just three games for Northwestern this season and completed 38 of 66 passes (57.6 percent completion percentage, nearly four percentage points higher than Lausch) for 354 yards and an interception. He is still looking for his first touchdown pass of the season.

The pass catchers Lausch and Wright have been throwing to are fifth-year slot receiver A.J. Henning, outside wide receivers Bryce Kirtz and Frank Covey IV and tight end Thomas Gordon.

Henning leads the team with 40 catches for 426 yards and three touchdowns, by far the favorite target for his signal callers with 13 more catches than Kirtz, who is second on the team with 27 receptions and 414

yards. Gordon is also a pass-catching threat at tight end as the third leading receiver on the team with 18 catches for 183 yards.

It hasn't helped that the Wildcats also haven't been able to get the run game going with Cam Porter leading the backfield. He has rushed for 387 yards on 97 attempts (4.0 average) getting into the end zone six times, leading a Wildcats rushing attack that averages just 112.1 yards per game on the ground this season, 114th nationally and 16th in the Big Ten.

Despite the lack of success on that side of the ball, Braun has already said that he plans to keep offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Zach Lujan after his first year with the program. Lujan spent last season calling plays for his alma mater South Dakota State, winning 2023 FCS Coordinator of the Year after powering the Jackrabbits to the sixth-ranked scoring offense in the FCS at 37.3 points per game.

"Zach has absolutely met expectations," Braun said. "The production on offense hasn't met our expectations and we're working tirelessly to get that fixed not only in the short term but the long term.

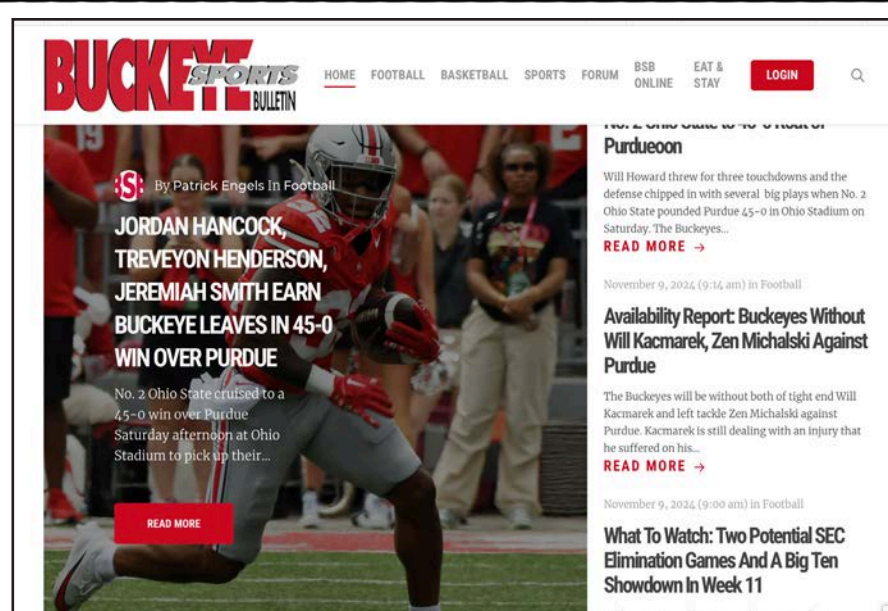
"I'm very confident in the man we have running our offense. All of us are very aware that the production is nowhere close to where it needs to be, and there are a lot of components to that. But I'm very confident – in the short and long term – that Zach is the right guy."

The struggle to both run and throw the ball could be in part due to multiple transfers leaving the program from last year's offensive line, but they did bring back three starters in left tackle Caleb Tiernan, right guard Josh Thompson and right tackle Ben Wrather, who are joined by USC transfer left guard Cooper Lovelace and redshirt sophomore center Jackson Carsello.

The offense shouldn't be a tough one for the Buckeyes to stop, and the Wildcats defense hasn't had to play against an offense as talented as Ohio State's to this point, so the fact that the Buckeyes were favored by 30 points when BSB went to press is no surprise.

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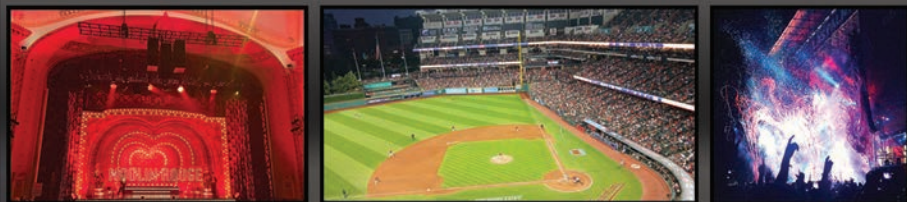
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Freshman Carter Helped Lead OSU To Rose Bowl

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When true freshman receiver Jeremiah Smith dropped a simple screen pass on his very first target as a Buckeye in the team's 52-6 season-opening win over Akron on Aug. 31, the tiniest bit of doubt might have crept into the back of the minds of younger Ohio State fans over if the former No. 1 overall recruit in the country could live up to the intense hype that surrounded him.

For the older generation of Buckeye fans, however, there was probably a sense of déjà vu. Forty years prior, a similarly supremely talented freshman receiver, future Pro Football Hall of Famer Cris Carter, was making his collegiate debut and made an eerily similar mistake.

"His first pass at Ohio State was thrown to him and hit him right in his hands, and he dropped it," said Bill Conley, who was a former high school head coach of Carter's at Middletown, Ohio, and linebackers coach at Ohio State while Carter was at Ohio State from 1984-86. "(Then-head coach Earle Bruce) was smart enough to know that was just a fluke, and he called the same exact pass next time, and he caught it and had a great game.

"After the game was over, I'm standing at Cris' locker, and he comes in from the game, and I'm just kind of smiling. I've got my arms folded, and he said, 'Coach, I know what you

want to say, 'Why did I drop that first pass?' You don't understand there's more people out there in that stadium than the whole city of Middletown.'"

Perhaps the only similarity between Carter's playing days in Columbus and those at Middletown was the presence of Conley.

Starting in Carter's junior season of high school, he and Conley were together all the way through his playing days at Ohio State.

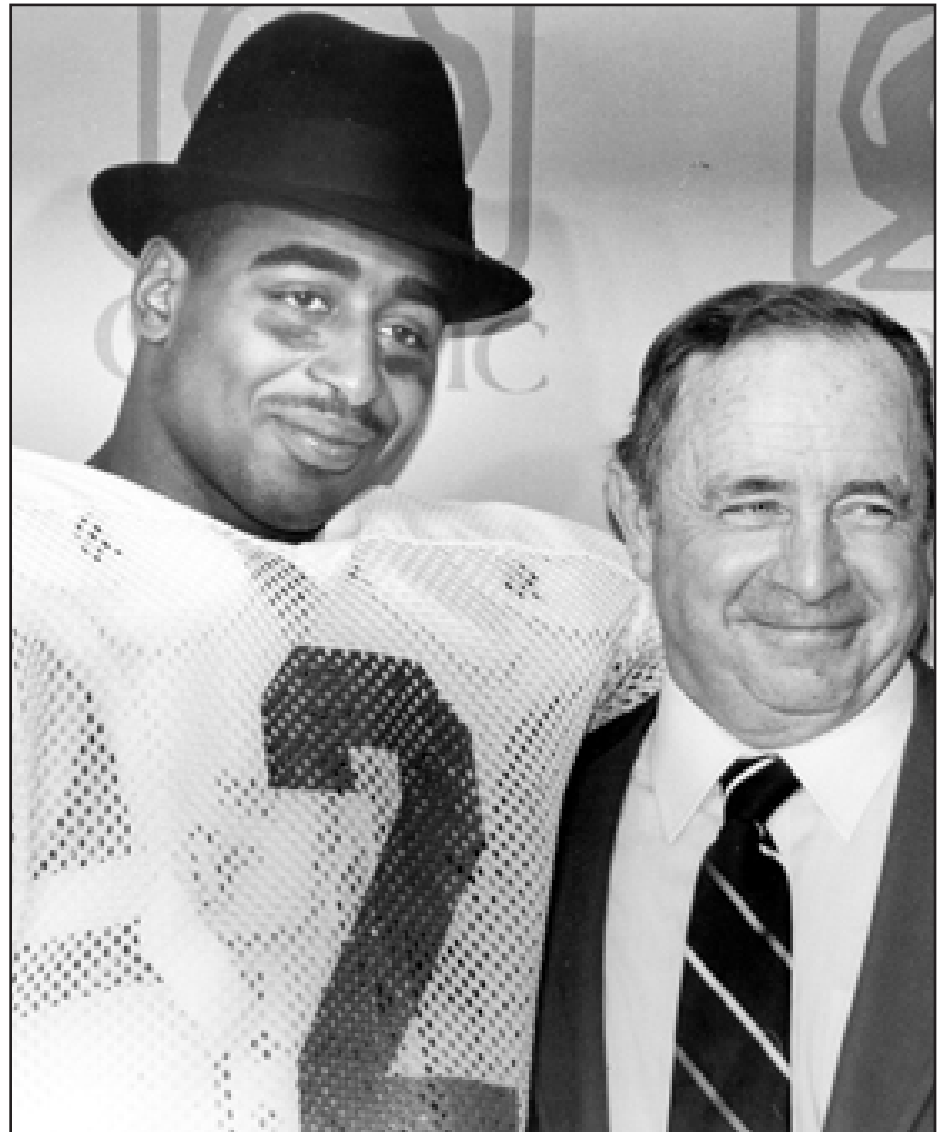
From pretty much the first moment he arrived as the head coach at Middletown High School, it was apparent to Conley that Carter was cut from a different cloth.

The first freakish display of athleticism occurred when members of the Middletown high school team were tasked with moving a weight machine into a truck so they could transport it from the middle school gym to the high school.

Conley told Carter to go to the back of the truck to help them balance the weight machine on the other side as they were lifting it up onto the back of the vehicle. Rather than taking the stairs to get into the truck as Conley expected, Carter took an unconventional way and left his coach stunned.

"(The back of the truck) was probably a good three feet, maybe 3½ feet," Conley said. "I thought he was going to walk up the steps. He flat-footed jumped a vertical leap I've never seen and landed flat up on the thing. I thought, 'This guy's not an ordinary human being, this guy's special.'"

As special as Carter was, there was no



FILE PHOTO

CATCHING ON — Cris Carter (left, with then head coach Earle Bruce) started his Ohio State career with a dropped pass similar to what Jeremiah Smith did this season, but that didn't stop the former Buckeye receiver from eventually setting multiple records for an Ohio State freshman.

guarantee at that point that he was going to be the Hall of Fame-caliber player he ended up being. With unmatched levels of athleticism, Carter had the capability to pursue both a basketball and football career after high school, and by the time Conley got to Middletown, Carter was actually leaning toward basketball.

"He was a guy that had planned on being a basketball player, a pro basketball player like his brother Butch, who was playing for the Indiana Pacers at that time," Conley said. "He was really trying to figure out if he wanted to play football his junior and senior year.

"Finally I told him, 'Cris, here's what you should do: Play (football) this year, and then next year, your senior year, if you just want to concentrate on basketball, that's fine. You could be a special football player.'"

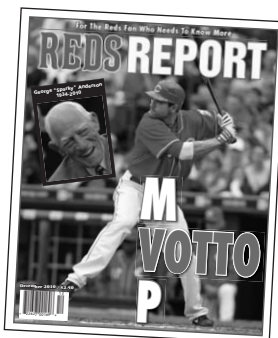
Carter took his coach's advice and went from a fringe starter as a sophomore to an all-state receiver as a junior. He still had success on the hardwood, though, and it wasn't until a sensational senior season that Carter started to shift his focus to football, according to Conley.

"He got a national name his senior year," Conley said. "All around the country, everyone knew about him. He just kind of fell in

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love with the game the more he played it.”

Carter’s national name allowed him to be targeted by college football teams around the country, and just because he was an in-state kid didn’t mean he was dead set on the Buckeyes.

Ohio State’s recruitment of Carter only became more difficult when then-defensive backs coach and Carter’s recruiter, longtime college and NFL assistant Dom Capers, left Ohio State in 1983 to become defensive backs coach of the USFL’s Philadelphia Stars.

Bruce replaced Capers with then-quarterbacks and wide receivers coach Jim Tressel, who was tasked with recruiting Carter. Despite the moving pieces in his recruitment, Carter eventually realized the value of staying in state and committed to the Buckeyes.

“I think as time went on, he realized all the benefits of being an in-state player and going to Ohio State, what that meant for your future, and everything like that,” Conley said. “He’s a pretty smart guy, and he’s savvy about that type of stuff, and he realized that it was obviously the best place for him.”

Conley, who was coached by Bruce during his own playing days at Ohio State, wasn’t far behind Carter in going to Ohio State. After the commitment of Carter, Bruce hired Conley as an inside linebackers coach. Knowing the level of talent Carter possessed, Conley knew Carter had the ability to start immediately into his collegiate career.

“It didn’t matter where he went to school,” Conley said. “When you’ve been around the game a while, you can tell real quickly, he was a special guy.”

It’s easy to see how an older player could be jealous of the opportunity given to Carter considering his young age, but according to Conley, Carter earned his playing time, and his traits were undeniable.

“He was a great route runner and had the ability to actually spin defensive backs around,” Conley said. “They could not cover him. He was so good on breaking his routes, he was so good pressing into a guy and then get separation, all of those skills that you need in a great receiver.”

Route-running is more than likely the most important aspect of any great receiver’s game, but Carter made a name for himself before he actually played in his first game with the Buckeyes with his jaw-dropping catches.

“Cris Carter used to make a catch in practice almost every day where the rest of the team cheered or wowed,” said Letterman Row’s Tim May, who covered Carter at The Columbus Dispatch from 1984-86.

According to May, Carter had his basketball playing career to partially thank for his sensational catches.

“Both of (Carter and Smith) had an innate ability to put themselves between the ball and the defender, which is kind of like blocking out in basketball,” he said.

It didn’t take long at all before Carter began to flash his superb catching abilities for the Buckeyes in games.

“We’re playing a game up in Northwestern (his freshman year), and the wind was blowing like crazy and snowing, and he runs a route and he gets in the end zone, and the ball is thrown and the wind takes it behind him,” Conley said. “He reached out behind

his back with one hand and caught the ball. I had never seen anything like that in my life.”

Carter’s traits translated to unprecedented numbers from a freshman wideout at Ohio State. In a critical midseason Big Ten matchup with an Illinois team firmly in the mix for the conference championship, he had a breakout game of sorts when his team needed him the most.

The Buckeyes were on the cusp of a second straight loss — suffering a 28-23 defeat to Purdue the week prior — after falling behind 24-0 to the Fighting Illini, but Carter helped the offense get back on track with seven receptions for 134 yards, including a key 33-yard touchdown reception from Ohio State quarterback Mike Tomczak.

Ohio State defeated the Fighting Illini 45-38, led by 274 yards rushing from Keith Byars. The win fueled the Buckeyes to their first outright Big Ten championship since 1979, despite two conference losses. The Buckeyes’ Big Ten championship crown came with a trip to Pasadena, Calif., for the Rose Bowl on January 1, 1985.

With the lights as bright as they had been all year, Carter saved his best performance for his last game of the season.

Carter hauled in nine catches for 172 yards — a Rose Bowl record at the time — and a fourth-quarter touchdown that gave the Buckeyes some hope against USC.

The relentless effort from Carter wasn’t enough to put the Buckeyes over the top, and the team lost 20-17, but it did put a bow on a record-setting freshman season.

Carter’s 41 receptions for 648 yards and eight touchdowns were a record high and were squarely put back in the spotlight when Smith came to Columbus.

The former No. 1 overall recruit in the country became well-known on social media for his Carter-esque one-handed grabs in practice with the Buckeyes. The hype surrounding Smith generated not just from his social media highlights but also a highly ac-

complished high school career at Opa Loca (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep, where he hauled in 88 catches for 1,376 yards and 19 touchdowns his senior season.

According to Conley, a similar hype would have followed Carter if he had played during a time period with social media.

“Off the wall, continual,” Conley said of the social media attention that would have surrounded Carter. “What a difference that would have made. Some social media can be good and it can be bad too. One thing that is really tough for athletes today is to keep a level head when you’ve got all this stuff going around, and the NIL, and all of those things. It’s a different world.”

Smith has handled all of the distractions with grace and maturity beyond his years, and outside of the slight hiccup at the very beginning of his season, in which he dropped his first pass, his first year of college football has been an absolute dream.

In nine games played, Smith has used his speed, route-running and exceptional ball skills to be one of the best receivers in the entire country and break all of Carter’s freshman receiving records.

In Ohio State’s 20-13 win over Penn State on Nov. 2, Smith broke Carter’s receiving yards record with a 55-yard outing. One week later, in Ohio State’s 45-0 win over Purdue on Nov. 9, Smith completed his personal goal to break Carter’s freshman records with six receptions, including one for

a 17-yard record-breaking touchdown.

For the season, Smith has 45 receptions for 765 receiving yards and nine touchdowns.

Smith has been every bit as good as his numbers suggest he’s been, but it’s easy to wonder how well Carter would fare in an era as conducive to talented receivers as this one is. According to Ohio State historian Jack Park, the modern era would have been kind to Carter.

“He would probably do pretty well with that,” Park said when asked by BSB how Carter would do in an era when college football teams throw the ball more than they used to. “He’s one of the great receivers that we’ve ever had and one of college football’s great receivers.”

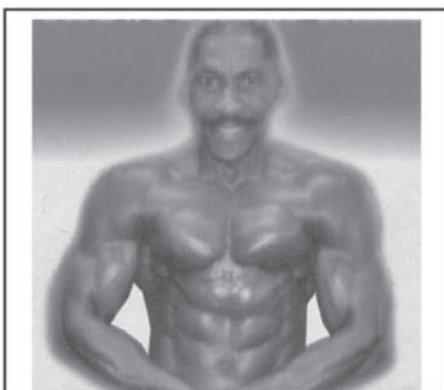
As Park said, Carter is one of the best receivers in Ohio State history, and he has the first-team All-Big Ten recognition from his sophomore and junior seasons to prove it. At least based on his start, Smith might end his career with a similar legacy as Carter.

It will be years before Smith’s legacy and place among the great receivers in the history of the Ohio State football program are set in stone, but the south Florida native understands the significance of the milestones he passed.

“That means a lot,” the soft-spoken Smith said when asked after the Purdue game what it meant to surpass Carter’s records. “It’s just a blessing for sure to be able to break Cris Carter’s freshman record.”



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Controversial Road Loss Casts Pall Over 1974 Season

Throughout the 2024 football season, *Buckeye Sports Bulletin* will publish historical stories from seasons ending in the numeral "4." This week, BSB looks back at 1974, a season marked by Archie Griffin's first Heisman Trophy as well as a conference game that wasn't officially decided until 45 minutes after it had ended.

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

Ohio State recognizes five national championships on the résumé of College Football Hall of Fame coach Woody Hayes, the final one coming in 1970.

It was a title the Buckeyes shared with Texas, courtesy of the National Football Foundation, an organization that annually awarded its title before bowl season. No matter that both OSU and the Longhorns lost their bowl games. Each school recognizes that shared 1970 national title.

The championship was the last of three claimed by longtime Texas head coach Darrell K. Royal, but Hayes could have had as many as eight since his teams came agonizingly close to championships in 1973, 1974 and 1975. During that three-season span, the Buckeyes posted an overall record of 31-3-1, won the Big Ten title each year, earned 15 first-team All-America honors, and boasted the services of Archie Griffin, who remains the only player ever to win the Heisman Trophy in back-to-back seasons.

Each of those three seasons during the mid-1970s also featured its own special brand of heartbreak in terms of a national championship, but Hayes always kept a special place in the darkest recesses of his mind for what happened to his 1974 team in early November at Michigan State.

Legendary sportswriter Dan Jenkins, then in the employ of the weekly magazine *Sports Illustrated*, summed things up nicely when he wrote, "To give it a memorable name, let's call it the Bizarre Bowl. For what happened on Nov. 9, 1974, in an athletic contest that was expected to be a normal 35-0 victory for No. 1 Ohio State over a group of undernourished and culturally deprived Michigan State Spartans defies, even at this hour, the logic of the mentally healthy everywhere."

To understand the ramifications of the game in question, one has to back up a little.

The program at Michigan State was still in a transitional phase after the retirement of longtime head coach Hugh "Duffy" Daugherty following the 1972 season. Long before Bo Schembechler arrived at Michigan in 1969 to become a constant thorn in the side of the Buckeyes, Hayes and Daugherty had waged war with one another.

Daugherty had claimed four national championships of his own with the Spartans, including back-to-back titles in 1965 and '66. Each of those title seasons was punctuated with a victory against Ohio State – 32-7 in East Lansing in '65, and a narrow 11-8 escape in Columbus the following season.

But the 1966 season signaled the beginning of the end of the Daugherty era at Michigan State. Hayes and his team won each of the next four meetings, and by the early 1970s, Daugherty had been forced out. In his place, MSU promoted defensive coordinator Denny Stolz, a move the university would come to regret in

1976 when Stolz was forced to resign amid a recruiting scandal.

But in 1974, Stolz was in his second season with the Spartans and on his way to Big Ten Coach of the Year honors. It was a remarkable achievement for a coach whose team had suffered through an 0-3-1 stretch that began in late September with a 56-14 blowout loss at UCLA.

By the time Michigan State was ready to entertain Ohio State on the second Saturday in November, however, the team had a modest two-game winning streak going and was coming off a 28-21 road victory against No. 20 Wisconsin.

Meanwhile, the Buckeyes appeared to be on an unabated march to the national championship. They entered the MSU game armed with a 19-game unbeaten streak and the nation's No. 1 ranking. And they weren't just winning. They were pummeling opponents with a star-studded roster that included seven players on their way to first-team All-America status in 1974.

Griffin, of course, was the tip of the offensive spear behind a line that included tackle Kurt Schumacher and center Steve Myers, each a consensus first-team All-American. Meanwhile, on the other side of the ball, the Buckeyes featured a front that included defensive end Van Ness DeCree and defensive tackle Pete Cusick, and a secondary headed by cornerback Neal Colzie. That trio was also on its way to first-team All-America status.

Special teams was an additional strength with Colzie coming off a 1973 season during which he set a new program record for punt return yardage (a mark that still stands) and Tom Skladany earning All-America first-team honors as a punter.

"We weren't just beating teams," Griffin told BSB. "We were beating them up. Most of our second-team players were getting as much playing time as the starters."

Hayes Status Uncertain

Before Ohio State could get to the bludgeoning of opponents, it first had to navigate some peculiarities to the beginning of the 1974 season.

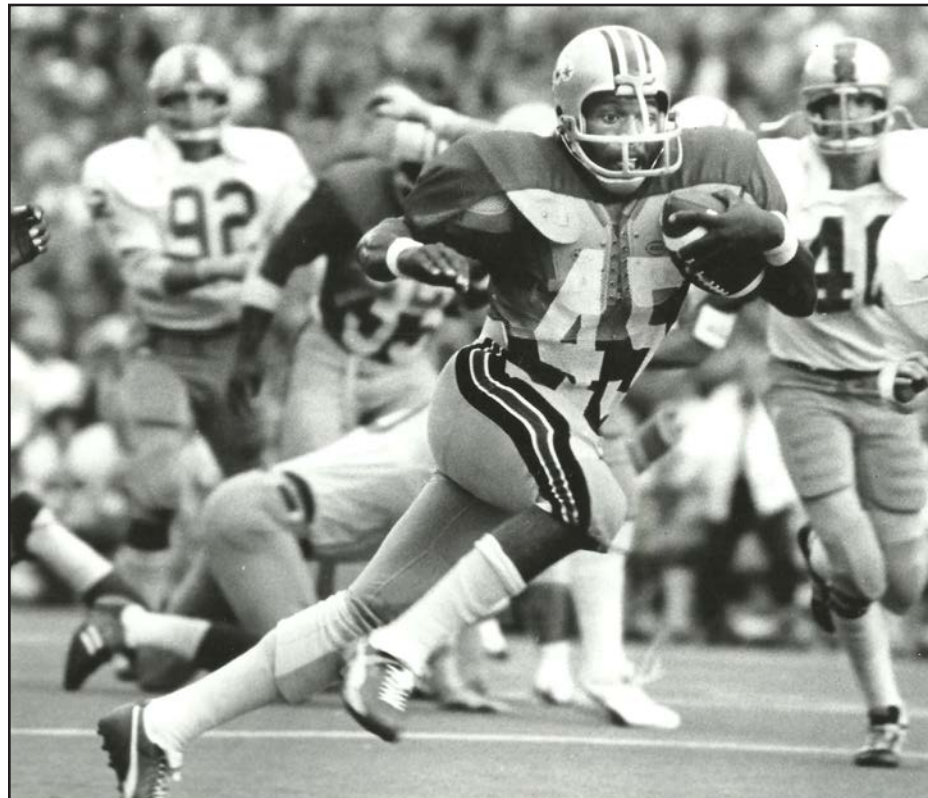
For much of the program's history, the opener had been a home game scheduled against a lesser opponent, but beginning in 1971, the Buckeyes began opening the season against a Big Ten rival, a practice that lasted through 1976.

Even more unusual was opening the season on the road, something Ohio State hadn't done since a 55-0 win at Otterbein in 1912. The Buckeyes were scheduled to open the 1974 campaign at Minnesota, playing at a venue where they had won five of their last six visits.

But even before that, no one really knew if Hayes would be coaching the team. The 61-year-old coach had suffered a heart attack on June 6 – exactly 100 days before the opener against the Golden Gophers – and he spent most of the summer recuperating.

Rumors began to swirl in early August that Hayes might be forced to retire due to health concerns, but the coach showed up for fall camp 25 pounds lighter while appearing, at least to Columbus Dispatch sports editor Paul Hornung, "more relaxed than he has seemed in years."

Hayes remained relaxed through the first half of the season as the Buckeyes often jumped out to early leads before cruising to victory. A perfect example was the opener at Minnesota when OSU took a 28-3 lead after three quarters



FILE PHOTO

HEISMAN POSE — Archie Griffin rushed for a school-record 1,675 yards with 12 touchdowns in 1974 to win his first Heisman Trophy, but a controversial loss to Michigan State cost the Buckeyes a chance for a national title.

before turning things over to the reserves to finish a 34-19 win.

The Buckeyes returned home the following week to truly unleash their firepower. Against an Oregon State team on its way to a 3-8 finish in 1974, Ohio State piled up 386 yards on the ground and rolled to a 51-10 victory. Griffin accounted for 134 yards and a touchdown, while his kid brother, Ray – still at running back before becoming an All-America safety later in his career – rushed for a pair of touchdowns.

That was pretty much the script for the Buckeyes as they ran roughshod over opponents by such scores of 52-7 (Wisconsin), 55-7 (at Northwestern) and 49-7 (Illinois).

The contest against the Fighting Illini was of particular note in that Ohio State rushed for 517 yards, tying the program record for the second-highest total in a single game. The Buckeyes had rushed for 517 yards during a 51-15 win at Illinois in 1962, while the record was set at 718 during a 59-0 wipeout of Mount Union in 1930.

The Griffin brothers combined for 230 yards and three touchdowns, while quarterback Cornelius Greene added 127 yards and one score on a career-high 25 carries. Greene was even allowed to go to the air against Illinois, completing 8 of 12 pass attempts for 127 yards and two touchdowns.

Putting the cherry at the top of the proverbial sundae was the fact that Hayes notched his 200th career victory in front of a homecoming crowd of 87,813, at the time the largest in Ohio Stadium history.

They were heady times on the OSU campus which had caught a case of championship fever.

The victory against Illinois extended Ohio State's unbeaten streak to 19 games – the longest since a 22-game streak during the Chic Harley era more than a half-century before – and strengthened the Buckeyes' stranglehold on the top spot in the national rankings. With

only Michigan State (4-3-1) and Iowa (3-5) in front of them before the traditional season finale against Michigan, some players began making plans for a return trip to the Rose Bowl.

But Hayes was having none of that. Although Michigan State had gotten off to a terrible start to its season, the Spartans were now on a two-game winning streak, and East Lansing had always been a tough place to play.

"Woody reminded us that our last Big Ten loss was to Michigan State the last time we were in East Lansing," OSU wingback Brian Baschnagel remembered. "Woody really hyped things up, trying to get us emotionally prepared for the game. To us, though, it was just another game."

Unseasonably warm temperatures in the low 60s greeted a buzzing crowd of 78,533 as it filed into Spartan Stadium for the noon kickoff. Millions more in a national television audience tuned in to watch the ABC telecast featuring veteran play-by-play man Chris Schenkel with Daugherty, the old Michigan State head coach, providing color commentary.

There was nothing much to get excited about in the first half, with the teams slugging their way to a 3-3 deadlock. OSU kicker Tom Klaban got the Buckeyes on the board first with a 22-yard field goal midway through the first quarter and was answered by Spartans kicker Hans Jorgen Nielsen with a 39-yarder with just two seconds remaining before halftime.

Although the score was tied with the teams heading to their respective locker rooms, Ohio State sensed it had been its own worst enemy. While each team had seven first downs, and the total yardage was nearly even with OSU holding a slight 130-123 edge, the Buckeyes had turned the ball over three times.

Colzie muffed a first-quarter punt return that would have given his team possession near midfield, and Greene was intercepted early in the second quarter on the Michigan State 8-yard

line. Then, the QB fumbled away the Buckeyes' final possession of the first half, setting up Nielsen's game-tying field goal.

After what was surely a fire-and-brimstone halftime speech from Hayes, Ohio State took the second-half kickoff and marched out from its own 18-yard-line to the Michigan State 9, where the Buckeyes had a first-and-goal. But they could get no closer than the 3-yard line before being forced to settle for a 20-yard Klaban field goal and a 6-3 lead with 8:11 remaining in the third period.

Klaban missed a chance to widen his team's lead early in the fourth quarter when his field-goal try from 25 yards sailed wide. But Ohio State cornerback Steve Luke recovered a fumble by MSU quarterback Charlie Baggett near midfield, a turnover the Buckeyes turned into a short touchdown drive.

With Archie Griffin and fullback Champ Henson alternating on carries, Ohio State ground out an eight-play, 56-yard drive topped by Henson's 1-yard touchdown dive. When Klaban tacked on the extra point, the Buckeyes were feeling pretty good about a 13-3 lead with 9:03 remaining in the game.

Then, as Jenkins later described it in SI, "All hell broke loose."

Waiting For An Outcome

Michigan State responded to the Ohio State touchdown with one of its own, driving 80 yards in just seven plays. Baggett connected with fullback Levi Jackson for a 17-yard gain on third-and-9, and four plays later he hooked up with split end Mike Jones for a 44-yard score.

Baggett's pass to Jackson on the two-point conversion try fell incomplete, but the Spartans had pulled within four points at 13-9 with 5:30 to go in the game.

On Ohio State's ensuing possession, the Spartans forced a quick three-and-out, stopping Henson a yard shy of the line to gain on third-and-3. It was a stop that became a harbinger of things to come.

Skladany got off a 51-yard punt that yielded only a 2-yard return to give Michigan State possession at its own 12-yard line. From there, Jackson took a handoff, burst through a hole over right tackle, and outran three OSU defenders all the way to the end zone.

The 88-yard touchdown run, then the second-longest in program history by an Ohio State opponent and still the fourth longest, was followed by a Nielsen PAT to give the Spartans their first lead of the afternoon at 16-13 with 3:17 remaining.

Meanwhile, Jackson had disappeared into a swell of green and white in the end zone, the spillover Spartan Stadium crowd swallowing him after the score.

"I thought I was going to get killed," Jackson told the Lansing State Journal in 2014. "Before I could turn around in the end zone, they were there. It was just a sea of people, and then you couldn't see people anymore. I thought I was going to end it right there."

But the game was far from over.

Ohio State took the ensuing kickoff, began what would be the final possession of the game at its own 29, and nearly turned the ball over on the first play. Greene tried to get a pass to Griffin in the right flat, but MSU cornerback Terry McClowry jumped the route and made what appeared to be a diving interception.

Two officials signaled an interception, but another waved it off, and the pass was ultimately ruled incomplete. Stoltz vehemently argued within an inch of an unsportsmanlike penalty, but in the days before replay, the Spartans head

coach had to abide by the decision.

On the next play, Griffin broke free for 31 of his game-high 140 yards to get into Michigan State territory. The Buckeyes eventually reached the Spartans 6-yard line with 40 seconds remaining.

Hayes called his final timeout to set up what he hoped would be the game-winning play – a handoff to Henson on an old-fashioned draw. The fullback plowed his way to the 1-yard line, after which officials called time out for a first-down measurement. When the Buckeyes were rewarded with a first-and-goal at the 1, the clock began again with 29 seconds left.

With Greene hunched tight under center, and a full-house backfield of Griffin, Henson and Baschnagel behind him, the Ohio State QB handed the ball to Henson, who took his 20th carry of the game into the middle of a tremendous pileup.

What transpired then was apparently up for debate.

"I hit Champ Henson right in the head," Pat McClowry, Terry's twin brother, recalled in 2014. "And my eyeballs fell on the goal line. I knew his head didn't get in."

Henson didn't agree.

"I saw the goal line behind our players," he said. "We pushed them back, and I went and got what I thought was the touchdown. Evidently not."

Officials didn't signal a touchdown, instead marking the ball at the half-yard line with the clock still ticking. Ohio State players – after an extended unpileup from the Spartans, who were taking their time getting up – tried to hurry to the line for one final play. The ball got snapped with players moving, bounced off Greene's hands and right to Baschnagel, who landed on it in the end zone.

One referee signaled touchdown, but two others, including crew chief Gene Calhoun, waved their arms to show that time had expired. What happened next was, in the words of Stoltz, "what makes it a legend."

While Michigan State fans rushed the field to celebrate the stunning upset, Hayes made his players wait in the tunnel, certain they would go back onto the field for one final play. They eventually went back to the locker room, where after nearly an hour of waiting, Big Ten commissioner Wayne Duke informed Hayes that the game was over. Michigan State had won.

"Woody went berserk," Greene recalled. "He immediately went after the commissioner verbally and told him that we got hosed. Coach wanted to battle. He told us to put on our helmets, and let's battle them the right way."

"It was just so heartbreaking to find out 45 minutes after a game that you lost. That's when you find out that football really is a game of inches."

Baschnagel later admitted he never thought his recovery in the end zone would be ruled a touchdown.

"The reality is, we didn't get the play off in time and we were in motion anyway," he said. "As far as that play is concerned, it wouldn't have been a legal play anyway."

"The real question was, should the officials have stopped the clock and let us get set because the Michigan State players had been holding us down. But it's a question without an answer."

Henson chalked it up to the funny way the football bounces sometimes.

"It's just one of those crazy things," he said. "You can blame the officials all you want, but in reality, that game never should have been that close. That was the best game they ever played,

and the worst game that we played that year. It just happened on the same day."

Back in Columbus, Henson's coach was not nearly as magnanimous.

'Bitter As The Devil'

Hayes returned to Columbus, showed up that night for his eponymous show on local television, and didn't even try to hide his feelings.

"I'm in no mood to be on this show," he told the late Saturday night audience. "I can't tell you how bitter I am. The older you get and the more you win, the more bitter you get with a loss. This was the greatest team we've ever had."

The bitterness only increased as Hayes ran through film of how the game ended.

"Watch how we can't get up!" he shouted. "Watch 'em hold down our players! Finally, when we do get up – there's about two seconds – we ran the play and went into the end zone. They ruled a touchdown and then they called it back and said it wasn't. ... When there's that much of a pileup, and near the goal and the clock is running out, it's up to the officials to (call) time out. That's where they blew it!"

"The officials said time had run out, but they should have stopped the clock on that pileup. And if there was illegal motion, there should have been a flag thrown on it. Both sides were probably offside on the last play, it looks like to me. The thing I resent is that no effort was made to get them to unpile. It's just as grossly unfair as it can be."

Reporting in the following week's issue of SI, Jenkins wrote, "That Michigan State scored one of the epic, colossal, classic, shocking (choose any two) upsets in the history of men and boys, 16-13, is no longer a secret on the globe."

"But exactly how it was managed in those last chaotic seconds is likely to remain a slight mystery because it was the greatest ending nobody ever saw."

The disappointment over the controversial ending carried over to the following week's game for OSU, a 35-10 win at Iowa that was closer than the final score would indicate. The Hawkeyes, on their way to a 3-8 finish under second-year head coach Bob Commings, had 339 yards of total offense but turned the ball over four times.

That set up a classic battle in the season finale between third-ranked Michigan and fourth-ranked Ohio State, the third time in the last five seasons the archrivals had squared off against one another as top-five teams.

The undefeated Wolverines drew first blood, jumping out to a 10-0 lead after the first quarter. But the Buckeyes clawed their way back thanks to four field goals from Klaban, a walk-on kicker who had fled at a young age with his family from war-torn Czechoslovakia.

Three of Klaban's field goals were 43 yards or longer, including a 45-yarder early in the fourth quarter that provided his team with a 12-10 lead.

His Michigan counterpart, Mike Lantry, had two fourth-quarter tries to give his team the win, but a 59-yard attempt at the midway point of the final period fell well short, and his 33-yard try with 16 seconds remaining sailed wide left to preserve the Buckeyes' victory.

After the game, Hayes stood in the middle of the postgame locker room celebration and declared, "This was the greatest kicking game I've ever seen." The coach first awarded Klaban the game ball and then, terming it a "battlefield promotion," announced he was giving his kicker a full scholarship, something no other Ohio State placekicker had ever been awarded during the Hayes era.

The outcome left Ohio State and Michigan tied for the Big Ten championship with identical 7-1 conference records, and the following day, Big Ten athletic directors met to formally select the Buckeyes as the league's Rose Bowl representative. (In those days, there were no formal tiebreakers, but head-to-head competition was always given top priority.)

Less than a month later, Griffin was in New York City to accept the Heisman Trophy following a season during which he had rushed for a school-record 1,675 yards and 12 touchdowns. He easily won the Heisman, garnering 1,920 points to outdistance USC running back Anthony Davis, who finished second with 819.

Davis would get a measure of revenge on New Year's Day when his Pacific-8 champion Trojans took on Griffin and the Buckeyes in Pasadena for the third straight year. It was a seesaw battle that featured four lead changes – three of them in the fourth quarter – before the Trojans scored a touchdown and two-point conversion with 2:03 remaining to squeeze out an 18-17 win.

Ohio State finished the 1974 season with a 10-2 record – the two losses coming by a total of four points – and wound up No. 4 in the final Associated Press writers' poll and third in the United Press International coaches' poll.

The Buckeyes returned in 1975 for a season that featured Griffin's unprecedented second Heisman win as well as the team's run at another national championship. But another shocking upset loss – this one to UCLA in the Rose Bowl, a team Ohio State had beaten by three touchdowns during the regular season – ended Hayes' last, best chance for one more national title.

Years later in retirement, Hayes would often revisit the controversial ending of the Michigan State game, claiming that he never really got over the loss.

"I'm still just as bitter as the devil," the coach said in 1984 on the 10th anniversary of the game. "People say I should just get over it, but that's not the way I think. You take something like that lightly, then pretty soon you're taking winning lightly, and that is something I will never do."

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McDonald Ready When Number Is Called

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Growing up in the small town of Suwanee, Ga., a suburb of Atlanta that holds a population of just over 20,000 people, many would assume Ohio State sophomore defensive tackle Kayden McDonald had always dreamt of playing for his hometown Georgia Bulldogs, whose campus was situated about 50 miles west of his hometown.

That may have been the aspirations of many of his teammates throughout his childhood, but McDonald instead grew up wishing to suit up for another flagship college football team 590 miles north of Suwanee, one which captured his attention after a specific captivating play in 2015.

"I've got a funny story," McDonald said. "When I was around (10 years old), I remember I watched Braxton Miller, he did a spin move in the game against Virginia Tech, and I was like, 'I'm going there when I get older.'"

McDonald was referring to Miller's now-iconic 53-yard rushing touchdown in Ohio State's 2015 season opener at Virginia Tech where he took a direct wildcat snap, raced toward the sideline and delivered a full 360-degree jumping spin past a Hokie defender for the impressive score.

The 6-3, 326-pound McDonald may not be spinning around defenders like Miller did at Ohio State, but nine years after that inspiring play, he is getting to live out his dream and play a significant role for the Buckeyes on the interior defensive line.

McDonald has become a key player in Ohio State's defensive line this season, but early on in his Buckeye career, his dream role with the Scarlet and Gray wasn't necessarily producing immediate results.

McDonald came into the program in 2023 as a highly touted four-star prospect out of North Gwinnett, where – the same school that produced senior nickel cornerback in 2021 – he amassed a combined 163 tackles, 98 tackles for loss and 32 sacks in his junior and senior seasons with the Bulldogs.

That high school success did not necessarily get him onto the field as a freshman, however. Sitting behind the likes of now-Cleveland Browns defensive tackle Michael Hall Jr. and future NFL players Ty Hamilton and Tyleik Williams, among others, McDonald rarely saw the field for the Buckeyes in his freshman season, recording just a single tackle, one half tackle for loss and a pass deflection in just four appearances.

McDonald, who did also appear as a fullback in Ohio State's 2023 Cotton Bowl loss to Missouri, admitted that sitting for much of the season was a difficult situation, but one he made the most of by leaning on some of the veteran members of the front four.

"It was tough, but I'm learning from guys like Mike Hall, Ty Hamilton, Tyleik. These guys are pro guys," McDonald said last season of his freshman campaign. "I asked as many questions as I had for them and really just got better every day."

McDonald's positive mentality would carry over into the offseason, when he said he put all his energy into carving out a role for himself on the defensive line, whether that be by working hard in the weight room with strength coach Mickey Marotti or diving into

film with his coaches and teammates.

It was an approach that he said was a necessary one to take if he wanted to show his coaches that he could be trusted during the regular season.

"I have to prove it every day," McDonald said in the spring. "You can't have any bad days at Ohio State, so I prepare to have a good day every day. I took different steps – being in the film room more, working on my craft. That's been better for me."

McDonald's patience and consistency seem to have paid off. Although Hamilton and Williams returned to reclaim their starting roles at defensive tackle and have assumed the majority of the reps, the Georgia native has emerged as a key depth piece on Larry Johnson's defensive line this season, recording 13 tackles with one tackle for loss in 128 total snaps.

McDonald's production may not have been noticed by many earlier in the season, but his impact was certainly loud in Ohio State's biggest game of the year to date against Penn State on Nov. 2.

With Williams forced to the sideline due to an injury and the Nittany Lions on the Buckeyes' 2-yard line with a chance to tie the game at 20 late in the fourth quarter, McDonald was thrust into the middle of Ohio State's defensive line as a key piece for the team's attempt at a goal-line stand.

McDonald, who is known for his infectious smile and vibrant personality, said there were many different things going through his mind when he ran out onto the field with the game on the line. On one hand, he was thinking about his mother, Kristi Green, and older brother and current UConn linebacker, Jayden, who both have supported him throughout his football journey, according to the defensive tackle.

But on the other hand, he knew he had a job to do on the field, and the only way to achieve that was to act with force and win the one-on-one battle in the trenches.

"(I was thinking about) the opportunity, the opportunity to go in," said McDonald, who admitted that he had a "smile inside of me" when he entered the game. "Once they called the package heavy, I knew I could come in and make a difference. It's always next man up, being ready when your number is called. Coach (Ryan) Day preaches that for us, so you just have to be ready."

"Watch the ball. Watch the ball first, then once the ball is snapped, take the guy and just push him back."

In what was possibly the biggest moment of his college career to date as well as the biggest of Ohio State's season, McDonald delivered in a big way. On third-and-goal, the sophomore instantly gained leverage on Penn State center Nick Dawkins and pushed him back about 2 yards, forcing him to disrupt the path of running back Kaytron Allen.

If that wasn't impactful enough, McDonald finished the play by grabbing ahold of Allen's foot before he had a chance to cut toward the end zone, allowing several members of Ohio State's defense to swarm toward the line of scrimmage and corral the Nittany Lions tailback just 1 yard shy of the end zone.

"It's third-and-2, game on the line in the biggest game of the year," McDonald said of his play. "We have all these goals set. Tyleik



SONNY BROCKWAY

DREAM BIG — Sophomore defensive tackle Kayden McDonald wanted to play for Ohio State since watching a Braxton Miller run in 2015. Now he's seeing more playing time, and he contributed a critical stop during the goal-line stand against Penn State.

went down, and somebody had to step up. I got my opportunity and pushed him back, made the play. I grabbed his leg, but he tried to get away. But no, all my boys came and helped me."

McDonald's shoestring stop helped Ohio State finish the goal-line stand one play later with an incompletion and eventually come away with the statement 20-13 road victory.

When asked to put that moment in perspective, the smiling sophomore offered a candid response on what it meant for him to make a play for the team he grew up wanting to play for, while also extending some praise to his teammates.

"Surreal moment," McDonald said of the stop. "Like, it gives me chills – a small-town kid coming in to make a play. But it started with my teammates, us all coming together on the goal line. I had Ty, I had Hero (Kanu) in there with me, JT (Tuimoloau), Jack (Sawyer), all of us. It took all of us for me to make that play."

McDonald said his goal-line stop caused his phone to blow up, with several people flooding his Twitter mentions and sending him congratulatory messages. While the world has seemingly just found out about Kayden McDonald, those within the program – McDonald included – know the impact he made in the Penn State game was anything but a surprise.

The sophomore mentioned that his ability to make a big-time play in a big-time game is a product of the preparation he put in during the offseason.

"What you all saw on (Nov. 2), that had to start in practice first," he said. "It's just a 'how you practice is how you play' mentality. Once you do it in practice, you can do it in a game, so that's what I did."

"This is what I do," McDonald added. "I enjoy playing football. The pride in pushing somebody back against their own will, Coach Johnson preaches that for us. If you do that, good things will work out for you."

McDonald's teammates echoed that statement. Ohio State senior center and Alabama transfer Seth McLaughlin has seen a lot of

talented defensive tackles in his five years of SEC and Big Ten college football, and that didn't stop him from gushing about the young defensive tackle, who he said has served as a constant disrupter on the inside in recent practices.

"Every Tuesday during inside run drill, he gets me a couple of times," McLaughlin said. "That kid's a freak on the inside, and when he just lines up and he gets to run forward and run through somebody's face, he's going to do really, really well. So I'm happy to see it happen to other people and not just me."

McDonald's successes both in practice and in games have earned him more of a role as the season progresses, which was evident in Ohio State's 45-0 blowout win over Purdue on Nov. 9 when he played 21 more snaps and totaled two tackles and one quarterback hurry. According to both Day and defensive coordinator Jim Knowles, McDonald's role will only continue to expand if he produces similar results the rest of the season.

"K-Mac really stepped up for us, and we're hoping that he can continue to give us more and more snaps," Day said. "He was in there for all those plays two weeks in a row (Nebraska and Penn State), so a big spot for him to step up in. We're going to continue to try to find ways to get him on the field."

"I think he's showing he has the ability to really change the game and change the line of scrimmage," Knowles added. "He's definitely a guy who's earning himself more playing time."

Regardless of how much playing time he will get moving forward this season, McDonald is going to continue playing with a smile on his face – whether it is on the inside or outside – while suiting up for the team he wished to play for almost a decade ago.

"This is historic," McDonald said of this 2024 Ohio State team. "This is once in a lifetime, having all the guys come back, always just being happy, having a smile on your face. It's a blessing to be here every day. We're the No. 2 team in the country, soon-to-be No. 1, but it's a blessing just to be playing every day and coming to work with the guys."

Noteworthy Week For Ex-Bucks Without Playing

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

There have been outstanding performances on the field for former Ohio State players such as the spectacular touchdown catch by Garrett Wilson of the New York Jets against the Houston Texans on Oct. 31, but a few days later the spotlight shone on several Buckeyes for off-field activities.

No, there wasn't anything nefarious. Instead, outside linebacker Jonathon Cooper made headlines by signing a four-year extension with the Denver Broncos on Nov. 4.

Good news for him, bad news for former Buckeye teammate Baron Browning, who was deemed expendable at the same position for the Broncos and was traded the same day to the Arizona Cardinals for a 2025 sixth-round pick.

In fact, the move was made shortly before the Broncos announced the new contract for Cooper, which pays a reported \$60 million for the life of the deal with \$33 million guaranteed.

Not bad for a seventh-round pick in the 2021 NFL draft, the same one in which Browning was tabbed in the third round. Cooper was a defensive end at Ohio State but quickly became a vital cog for Denver. He and Browning played for the Buckeyes from 2017-20.

"I always believed in myself, and my family helped with that so much, just always believing in me, always telling me what I'm capable of and helping me along," Cooper said.

One day later, another ex-Buckeye was in the news when the New Orleans Saints traded cornerback Marshon Lattimore and a 2025 fifth-round pick to the Washington Commanders for 2025 third-, fourth- and sixth-round picks.

The move was seen as a commitment by ownership to the surprising Commanders, who are 7-3 after a 28-27 loss to the Pittsburgh Steelers on Nov. 10. The Commanders are closing in on their first winning season since 2016.

The trade "shows they have confidence in us and they see us going far this season," Commanders cornerback Benjamin St-Juste said.

Now that the dust has settled on the transactions, here's where the Buckeyes reside.

With Browning's departure, defensive back Tanner McCalister, who is on the practice squad, is the other OSU player on the Denver roster.

"Baron's been my guy, my teammate for eight years," Cooper said. "I was really hurt and really sad to see him go. But I know that it's a good opportunity for him, and I know he'll take full advantage of it. We all know how talented Baron is. A fantastic football player. A fantastic dude. That's my brother, and I wish him all the best. I talked to him before he went, and I know he's going to go there and ball."

Browning joins rookie wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. and left tackle Paris Johnson Jr. on the Cardinals.

Wide receivers Terry McLaurin and Noah Brown and defensive tackle Jalyn Holmes are other Buckeyes with the Commanders.

Lattimore wasn't shy in telling ESPN what attributes he brings to the Command-



FILE PHOTO

PAY DAY — Former Buckeye Jonathon Cooper, a seventh-round pick by the Denver Broncos in 2021, earned a hefty raise when he signed a four-year contract extension worth a reported \$60 million on Nov. 4.

ers: "Experience, first. It's my eighth year in the league. And just a dog. I'm going to go out there and do everything I can for the team to get the win."

Staying Put

Cooper entered the Nov. 10 game against vs. the Kansas City Chiefs second on the team with 5½ sacks. He had another sack in the loss to the Chiefs. He led the Broncos last season with 8½.

"I'm very proud of Coop," Denver cornerback Pat Surtain said. "You talk about a guy that came in with the right approach, with the right work ethic and everything along the lines of being a great player. That him being a seventh-round pick, him going through the lean years of the roster, for him to be able to secure that contract, that's huge."

Cooper was grateful that contract negotiations were amicable.

"The process was pretty quick, easy and simple," he said. "I have really good agents, and the people across the team, they like them. The process went really smooth, and I felt like I didn't need to take it any further than what it was because I love this program."

Now that the ink is dry, Cooper has personal goals to achieve.

"Pro Bowl for one, being an All-Pro outside linebacker," Cooper said on Nov. 6 "Being dominant and really holding myself to the standard that was set (by previous Denver outside linebackers) with Von (Miller) and DeMarcus Ware and even (Bradley) Chubb. I want to keep going and keep working, and I just have a new motivation to keep going now. I'm really excited."

Broncos coach Sean Payton is happy as well, "I'm excited for him. He's tough, he's competitive. I think he's a really good teammate. You know exactly the physicality you're getting with a player. He certainly deserves it."

Free Bird

Browning was disappointed leaving the team that drafted him but sees the trade as a

restart of his career in the desert.

He only started two games this season – partly because of a stint on the injured list due to a foot problem – but he told the Arizona media after the trade that he had to balance not complaining about the situation with acknowledging he was frustrated.

He and Cooper were set to be unrestricted free agents after this season.

"I didn't want to be a distraction to my teammates, be a distraction to my unit back in Denver," Browning said. "I was just ready for it to be done just to get this fresh start and show what I can do. I know I'm a starter in this league, and I know I can play at a high level, so I'm just really excited about this opportunity to do that here."

Payton understood Browning's disappointment with how his tenure ended in Denver but also sees the trade as a positive for him

"Well in fairness to Baron even, we had a long talk, and just the contract year, the amount of snaps – he can get more snaps," Payton said. "It's the puzzle of trying to look outwards too, and certainly he's been a part of what we've been doing. So, it's never easy to trade someone, and yet I thought just in our visit, (General Manager) George (Paton) and I and Baron sitting down he totally understood. He was looking forward to getting more snaps, and certainly in the (contract) year for him it's important."

Johnson was excited to have another Buckeye on the team.

"To hear that today is awesome. I got to play with him for a year, my freshman year, that COVID-19 season at Ohio State. He's an awesome teammate," Johnson said. "As a player, he's an all-around athlete. Having him as an addition to the locker room is awesome."

"I haven't gone against him since I was 18, 285 (pounds) but I thought I was huge. At the same time, I think I got a feel for the whole year. In that COVID-19 year we were together 24/7, the entire team. I've seen his tape the past two years and just keep up with

the Buckeyes around the league

"He's explosive off the ball and I think that's why he's able to threaten the edge often. So, I think he adds that to the locker room."

Browning is thrilled by the move as well.

"It's always good to feel wanted," Browning said. "You don't want to talk to the girl who doesn't want you. I would say it's the same thing. I'm just happy they wanted me, and I'm happy to be here."

"If you watch the tape, I feel like I've been rushing the pass at a high level, even though I haven't had the production I want this season. But I know it's coming. I'm trusting the process and continuing to approach work every day with the same mindset to get better."

Just as the Commanders feel acquiring Lattimore is a vote of confidence for the team, Cardinals linebacker Mack Wilson Sr. praised Arizona general manager Monti Os- senfort.

"It shows how much he believes in this team and how much he's willing to do to get this team better," Wilson said. "We felt like our pass rush was a need with (outside linebacker Dennis) Gardeck going down. He brought in Baron, a high-caliber guy that can do everything at both levels – athletic, rush, and can drop in coverage. It's a great addition."

Bringing It

As much as Lattimore, the 11th pick in the 2017 draft, wants to contribute immediately to the Commanders' playoff run, he did not play against Pittsburgh because of a lingering hamstring injury.

"We're trying to engage him as quickly as we can, so when it becomes 'go time,' there's not a lag there," Commanders coach Dan Quinn said on Nov. 8. The Commanders also play the Philadelphia Eagles on the following Thursday (Nov. 14).

Lattimore is a four-time Pro Bowler, who at age 28, is still in his prime, although he is up to 20 missed games the past two and a half seasons because of his hamstring issues.

Still, Quinn said the trade was a no-brainer.

"This was easy, man. Acquire a player like Marshon's caliber, the toughness – the physicality," he said. "Whether it was this month, six months from now, this is a player that you want to be on your team. He stands for the right stuff. He has an attitude to battle, and we're really pumped to have him here."

Lattimore last allowed a touchdown in single coverage in 2021.

"You've got to be a smart guy to be able to do that," Quinn said. "He's shown over the course of his career the ability to play inside and outside and staying connected to receivers. That's the name of the game. He's able to play it tight. He's a good tackler. So we're pumped we got him."

"Our theme of our program is competition. We're going to absolutely and relentlessly compete at everything. That's the chance to make our team better, make the group better, make you better," Quinn added. "What does Marshon mean? He's a competitor. We're adding a real dog-ass competitor to a group of guys who like to fight and like to battle. To me, that's an extension of competing, to say we're not going to miss a moment to add a competitor onto our team."

Sanchez Invited To Navy All-American Bowl

Ohio State has been able to put together a strong 2025 class, holding the top spot in the 247Sports team rankings for most of the cycle until Alabama passed it in recent weeks.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Greg Wilson

Largely helping the class has been the defensive side of the ball, especially Houston North Shore five-star cornerback Devin Sanchez (6-2, 170), who has been showing why he is the No. 1-ranked corner in the class in his senior season, impressing enough to be invited to the Navy All-American Bowl.

Sanchez told 247Sports that he's looking forward to being part of the game.

"It was really a process going back to my sophomore year when I first became an Adidas All-American," Sanchez said. "It was an opportunity to not go that far. San Antonio isn't too far from Houston. That played a factor in it. Some of the guys who are All-Americans like my future teammate Tavien (St. Clair) and other guys I know around the country are playing in it. Just going there and competing with some of the top guys in the nation is a big reason."

The five-star told 247Sports that he is using the game as a fun final experience he can have in high school but is also going to try to use it as an opportunity to prove that he deserves his ranking as the No. 1 cornerback in the 2025 class.

"A little bit of both," Sanchez said. "The top guys in the country are going to be out there competing against each other. I want to just have fun with some of these guys I get to play against. Being a corner, some of the top receivers are going to be there, and

they are going to try their best. I'm going to have some fun, but when it's time to get down and dirty I'm going to take it very seriously. These are top receivers, and I'm the top corner. I wouldn't say I have something to prove, but there are always going to be eyes on me."

Sanchez committed to Ohio State on Jan. 6 and hasn't wavered at any point, reminding people multiple times on social media that he wanted to be a Buckeye. He hasn't taken any visits since he committed.

Knowing he's going to be in Columbus in 2025, Sanchez is excited about getting started because of how the Buckeye defense has performed this season, especially with how it has responded to adversity, saying he believes cornerbacks coach Tim Walton is doing very well with the defensive backs.

"I'm seeing the defense playing with a spark ever since that Oregon loss," Sanchez said. "I think they played well against Oregon, but the intensity went up. I love what the DBs are doing with Coach Walt. He's got the guys playing really well. I feel like the DBs are having a great season. They are playing outstanding football right now. I just feel like if it all comes together and everyone stays healthy, it will be a tough defense to beat.

"They are one of the top defenses in college football, and it's great. I can't wait to be a part of it and go out there and show the coaches what I can do and my level of skill. I feel like I've shown that at the high school level, and now I can show it at the collegiate level."

Sanchez is set to be an early enrollee at Ohio State after he graduates from North Shore early, but before then, he will play in the East vs. West matchup inside the Alamodome in San Antonio on NBC. He will be on the field with 99 of the nation's other top high school football players who were each selected by the Navy All-American Bowl selection committee, which includes members of the All-American Bowl and 247Sports.

OSU Football 2025 Commitments

Players in the class of 2025 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Tarvos Alford	LB	6-2	210	★★★★	Vero Beach, Fla.
Phillip Bell	WR	6-2	195	★★★★	Mission Viejo, Calif.
Jarquez Carter	DL	6-2	284	★★★★	Newberry, Fla.
Jake Cook	OL	6-5	295	★★★	Westerville (Ohio) North
Faheem Delane	SF	6-3	195	★★★★	Olney (Md.) Our Lady of Good Counsel
Zion Grady	DE	6-4	235	★★★★	Enterprise, Ala.,
Cody Haddad	SF	6-1	175	★★★★	Cleveland St. Ignatius
Bo Jackson	RB	6-0	205	★★★★	Cleveland Villa Angela-St. Joseph
De'zie Jones	WR	6-0	180	★★★★	Wayne (N.J.) DePaul Catholic
Eli Lee	LB	6-3	230	★★★	Akron Hoban
Brody Lennon	TE	6-4	220	★★★★	Gates Mills (Ohio) Gilmour Academy
Carter Lowe	OT	6-5	290	★★★★	Toledo Whitmer
Zahir Mathis	DL	6-6	225	★★★★	Philadelphia Imhotep Institute
Jayvon McFadden	IOL	6-5	300	★★★★	Upper Marlboro (Md.) Riverdale Baptist
London Merritt	DL	6-3	250	★★★★	Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy
Bodpegn Miller	WR	6-4	180	★★★★	Ontario, Ohio
Trajen Odom	DL	6-4	285	★★★★	Matthews, N.C.
Na'eem Offord	CB	6-1	185	★★★★★	Birmingham (Ala.) Parker
Riley Pettijohn	LB	6-2	215	★★★★	McKinney, Texas
Quincy Porter	WR	6-3	190	★★★★	Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic
Nate Roberts	TE	6-4	235	★★★★	Washington, Okla.,
Maxwell Roy	DL	6-3	250	★★★★	Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep
Devin Sanchez	CB	6-2	170	★★★★★	Houston North Shore
Tavien St. Clair	QB	6-4	225	★★★★★	Bellefontaine, Ohio
DeShawn Stewart	SF	6-2	185	★★★★	Wayne (N.J.) DePaul Catholic
Isaiah West	RB	5-11	208	★★★	Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep

OSU Football 2026 Commitment

Player(s) in the class of 2026 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Chris Henry Jr.	WR	6-5	205	★★★★★	Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei

The game will be broadcast on NBC and Peacock on Jan. 11, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. ET.

Buckeyes Pursuing Cincy CB Commit

Ohio State sent out a scholarship offer to a 2025 Cincinnati commit on Nov. 3, extending it to Cartersville, Ga., three-star cornerback Jordyn Woods (6-3, 175).

"Coach Walt and Coach (Gerren) Du-

Hart offered me," Woods told 247Sports. "I had a feeling they were going to offer, but I didn't know for sure. It was exciting when they did, being committed to Cincinnati and then getting an offer from Ohio State and the Big Ten."

Woods has been committed to the Bearcats since June 25 and hasn't been exploring many options since, not taking any more official visits after he had gone to Virginia,

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ASK AN ANALYST

with Marc Givler of Buckeye Huddle

The Buckeyes are hosting Cartersville, Ga., three-star cornerback Jordyn Woods (6-3, 175) for a visit when they play Indiana. What do you make of him as a prospect, and does this have anything to do with OSU not being confident that Birmingham (Ala.) Parker five-star cornerback and OSU commit Na'eem Offord (6-1, 185) will sign?

"Yeah. I think first of all, as a player, he's really interesting because he's 6-3, and that's legitimate. He's really tall, and he's got long arms. His senior film just came out, and what I found interesting about it was how good and aggressive he is in run support. He's a physical kid, so I think you could play him on the outside at corner with that length, but you could also play him at nickel, where Jordan Hancock plays, because he does do such a nice job in run support. You could even put him back at safety with his size and ability to run. I think he's kind of a Swiss Army knife in terms of where he can play for you in the secondary, and you always need guys like that in today's game, guys that can play a little – a guy like Hancock or Caleb Downs, these are very valuable pieces that you can kind of move around the formation. He's got some of that versatility in him. I'm a little surprised by his offer list, to be honest. I thought he would have more offers, but he has picked up some Big Ten interest and some other Power Four interest since committing to Cincinnati. He's a stock-up kind of player the last few months.

"As for Ohio State recruiting him, they will certainly take him with Offord in the class or without Offord. That's not really a thing, I don't think, where they think they're losing Offord. It's probably more of a glimpse at kind of how they feel about flipping (Oregon commits) Conroe, Texas, four-star cornerback Dorian Brew (6-0, 200) or a Shaker Heights (Ohio) five-star cornerback Trey McNutt (6-0, 180), than it is necessarily about how they feel about Offord. Obviously, Na'eem Offord is still very much out there, very much taking visits elsewhere, very much in play for some other programs."

It seems like Michigan is beginning to compete when it comes to NIL, reportedly offering Belleville, Mich., five-star quarterback and LSU commit Bryce Underwood (6-4, 205) north of \$5 million. Do you think they are getting aggressive because of how they are doing this season? Do you think they are going to continue to compete at this level with NIL going forward?

"I've always been skeptical of schools that cry poor over NIL. There was a time not very long ago that people acted like Ohio State didn't know what they were doing with NIL, and we clearly know that's not the case by now. Michigan maybe had an awakening a little bit. I'm a little skeptical of every school that says, 'Oh, we just now have money.' I think that's kind of an excuse teams were using when they were missing out on recruits, to be perfectly honest with you. Moving forward for sure, I certainly expect Michigan will be competitive in NIL. They've got the resources to do that. Obviously, their roster this year has a lot of holes in it, but most glaring at quarterback, and moving forward, some of these older veterans they've had move on to the NFL or wherever. They've got some gaps in that roster. I think either via NIL or the transfer portal, they're going to have to get pretty aggressive somewhere."

Montgomery (Ala.) Carver four-star running back and Alabama commit Anthony Rogers (5-8, 190) visited for the game against Purdue. How real are the Buckeyes' chances at flipping him from Alabama, and if they do get him, would OSU stick with three running backs in the 2025 class?

"They would stick with three running backs in the class. There was a point back in the spring, early summer, where they would have taken three as well, as they were not able to get Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star running back and Oregon commit Jordon Davison (6-0, 216). It's always been a possibility. They shelved that for a while, but Carlos Locklyn has obviously been really pushing for Anthony Rogers. He's a very different back than what they have. Anthony Rogers is like a

back that maybe we haven't seen at Ohio State very much over the years. He's more of an old-school Chip Kelly, De'Anthony Thomas type of back – get him in space. He's a tremendous pass catcher out of the backfield or out of the slot, so he can do a lot of things in the passing game. He's a very electric open-field runner. They would certainly be able to piece that together, make that work. Obviously it's on the other two running backs as well to see that and be OK with it. Being a different type of back, I don't think that causes much of an issue there.

"As for their chances, I've been fairly skeptical, and I got a little more skeptical when he was supposed to visit two weeks ago and didn't visit. The thing is, I did talk to someone that really is tied in with Alabama football about a week ago, and they're very skeptical that he signs with Alabama. They don't think he's going to sign with Alabama. Now that doesn't necessarily mean he's going to sign with Ohio State, but they're not convinced he's going to sign with Alabama. I think in years past, this was a guy I just kind of laughed about and said there's no chance they're getting him, but there are some ingredients here that allow for the situation to maybe happen. Of course, one is that there's a sense that he's not going to stick with Alabama. Ohio State has picked up Enterprise, Ala., four-star defensive end Zion Grady (6-4, 235). For now they have Na'eem Offord. (Rogers) actually spent his freshman year at Pike High School down there, which is where Quinshon Judkins went, so there are some ties there that make this possible."

Who are some Ohio State commits and targets to keep an eye out for in the next couple of weeks as the high school playoffs take place?

"Huber Heights Wayne five-star wide receiver Jamier Brown (5-11, 160) – I think he's a five-star-caliber player in that class (2027). I think he's going to be one of the best receivers from Ohio in a really long time. You've got Toledo Central Catholic High School four-star cornerback Victor Singleton (6-0, 160). He was the best player on the field in last year's state championship game."

Boston College and Cincinnati, three of the five schools he holds offers from. The fifth school to offer Woods was Michigan State.

But despite his previous lack of interest in flipping from Cincinnati, now that he has an Ohio State offer it's something he's exploring. Woods confirmed that he will be making an official visit to Ohio Stadium for the Nov. 23 game against Indiana, his second time this season after being on campus for the 21-17 win over Nebraska on Oct. 26.

"It was good, I loved it," Woods said of his Oct. 26 visit. "I've been talking to Coach Walton for about four weeks now. They said I would fit perfectly in their defense."

Woods is ranked the No. 1,262 overall player in the country, the No. 117 cornerback and the No. 139 player in the state of Georgia by 247Sports composite, but despite the relatively low ranking, Walton seems to have a strong interest in him.

It's possible the Buckeyes pursuing Woods could be a sign that they aren't confident that OSU commit and flip candidate Birmingham (Ala.) Parker five-star cornerback Na'eem Offord (6-1, 185) will sign with them by the time the early signing period comes on Dec. 4. But it could also be the fact that they had only five defensive backs in the 2025 class as BSB went to press, with Offord and Sanchez being the only two cornerbacks.

Though it could take the 2025 class some time to make a large impact on the field when they get to Columbus, losing Denzel Burke, Davison Igbinosun and Jordan Hancock is going to make the elite room much thinner next season, so taking a third cornerback in the class wouldn't be surprising either.

Woods said he is also talking to Kentucky and Miami (Fla.) but he isn't sure if he is going to visit those programs yet. He won't be an early graduate, but he does want to have his recruitment finished by the early signing period.

OSU Offers 2027 Tight End

The Buckeyes were fairly active over the week leading up to the Purdue game, also

sending a scholarship offer on Nov. 4 to Norwalk, Iowa, tight end Luke Brewer (6-4, 210), a 2027 recruit.

Ohio State is one of 13 offers the tight end has to show so far, but with them coming from schools such as Georgia, Iowa, Iowa State, Kansas State, Miami (Fla.), Michigan, Nebraska, Penn State and Tennessee, there are likely to be many more in his high school playing days.

Pulling a tight end in the state of Iowa

away from the Hawkeyes could be tough given the success they have had with the position in recent years. They have sent many players to the NFL to be prominent players in the league, including Sam Laporta of the Detroit Lions and T.J. Hockenson of the Minnesota Vikings, but Brewer was excited when he got his offer from the Buckeyes.

"When you think of Ohio State, you think

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Buckeyes Hope To Lure Iowa Tight End

Continued From Page 25

about them always being in the realm of a natty, so the news (of an offer) was pretty electric," Brewer told Buckeye Huddle. "I think one thing that sticks out from watching them is that they score. When you watch them, they put up 40 points a game, and who wouldn't want to be somewhere that puts the ball in the end zone and wins?"

He isn't going to wait long to get to campus after receiving his offer, saying he is going to try to visit for either the Indiana game or the Michigan game on Nov. 30.

Brewer is very confident in what he will bring to a team at the next level.

"I think I am a versatile tight end," Brewer said. "I am a key part of our run game blocking-wise. I finish my blocks and get nasty in the trenches, but then I also can put a move on a defender and make them miss in the pass game. I am always looking to increase my speed because I know at that level of ball you must be fast."

He also told Buckeye Huddle that he is always watching some of his favorite tight ends to try to add things to his game that they do.

"Guys I look up to are guys like Travis Kelce and his ability to find space and break down a zone defense, and then Ben

Brahmer from Iowa State," he said. "Being able to watch him play and get tips from him, he has grown on me and it is always fun to watch him play. He's a big-time player for sure."

OSU Hopes To Hammer Down Visitors

With games like Iowa and Nebraska in the past plus Indiana and Michigan in the future, the Buckeyes had a relatively light weekend of recruiting visitors for the 45-0 win over Purdue on Nov. 9, but there were still multiple prospects who were able to take in the campus during the Ohio State win.

The following list of recruits was compiled using BSB's own information, reports from other outlets and recruits themselves.

The committed prospects who were at the game were Bellefontaine, Ohio, five-star quarterback Tavien St. Clair (6-4, 225) – whose high school career ended on Nov. 1 in the first round of the OHSAA playoffs – and Westerville (Ohio) North three-star interior offensive lineman Jake Cook (6-5, 295), who has made the short trip to be at almost all of the Buckeye home games this season.

Other 2025 prospects on campus were Montgomery (Ala.) Carver four-star running back and Alabama commit Anthony Rogers

(5-8, 190); Uniontown (Ohio) Lake three-star linebacker and Ohio commit Charlie Christopher (6-1, 220); and Xenia, Ohio, kicker Sean Leonard (6-3, 220).

Rogers has been a flip candidate for the Buckeyes for a long time, and the likelihood of him not signing with the Crimson Tide in December seems to be getting higher. If he were to flip, the No. 8 running back in the country would be the Buckeyes' third in the class, joining Cleveland Villa Angela-St. Joseph four-star Bo Jackson (6-0, 205) and Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep three-star Isaiah West (5-11, 208).

From the 2026 class was Hollywood (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna four-star safety Derrek Cooper (6-1, 190) – the same high school that produced Ohio State freshman wideout Jeremiah Smith; Baltimore St. Frances Academy five-star defensive end Zion Elee (6-4, 220); Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School four-star tight end Corbyn Fordham (6-4, 215); Mineral (Va.) Louisa County four-star running back Savion Hiter (5-11, 182); Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic four-star athlete Jermaine Kinsler (6-7, 260) and four-star cornerback Jordan Thomas (6-0, 175); Sarasota (Fla.) Cardinal Mooney three-star interior offensive lineman Da'Ron Parks (6-5, 282); Marietta (Ga.) Kell three-star linebacker Brayden Rouse (6-3, 205);

and Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star wide receiver Madden Williams (6-1, 185).

"It was a good atmosphere, the coaches were great and everybody treated me like family," Kinsler told 247Sports after his visit. "It was my first game at Ohio State. I'd say I was most impressed with the fans, how loud it gets."

The 2027 prospects who made appearances were Caledonia, Mich., quarterback Bryce Backus (6-3, 180); Tampa (Fla.) Jesuit four-star linebacker Kaden Henderson (6-2, 200) – whom the Buckeyes offered on Oct. 31; Baltimore St. Frances Academy four-star cornerback Raylaun Henry (6-2, 160); Buffalo (N.Y.) Canisius running back Elijah Kimble (5-10, 180); and Indianapolis Lawrence North four-star wide receiver Mons-hun Sales (6-5, 195).

Kimble left his visit with an offer from running backs coach Carlos Locklyn and told 247Sports that it was the offer he was waiting on.

"I love the culture of OSU," he said, "from the historic team all the way to the amazing band."

OHSAA Playoffs Second Round For Commits, Targets
Division I, Region 1 – No. 7 Lakewood

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago — 1989

At one time, a football player of Preston Harrison's size probably would have been relegated to a life in the trenches.

At 6-5, 238 pounds, Columbus South High School's star attraction might have spent his days on the practice field staring down a tackling dummy and butting heads as a down lineman during games. Football, however, had changed dramatically in recent years.

Harrison typified a new breed of football player, one whose speed, strength and size enabled him to play just about anywhere.

During a brilliant career at South, Harrison played safety and linebacker on defense and tight end, halfback and quarterback on offense. In 1989, he put on a dazzling display of raw athletic ability as a two-platoon player while leading the Bulldogs to a 7-3 record.

Ohio Football Recruiting News called Harrison "one of the top athletes in Ohio. He has great physical skills with his size, speed and strength. Preston went to the OSU Quarterback School this past summer and was very impressive. Many schools see him as a Tony Rice-type quarterback in their offense.

30 Years Ago — 1994

It's not that Sean Banks wasn't interested when college recruiters and writers came calling. He simply did not have the time.

That's because Banks played for Youngstown (Ohio) Cardinal Mooney, one of the most demanding high school programs you'd ever find.

"I'm not involved with making any commitment or anything right now," said Banks, a senior outside linebacker and fullback. "When I'm on the football field, I'm not thinking about what college I'm going to. I'm worried about the team.

"We still have a chance to make the playoffs, and I'm trying to learn all I can. That other stuff will have to wait until the season is over."

Banks was one of the state's most coveted football recruits, but he had no intention of being wined and dined by major colleges, at least not for a while. Late-night suppers and early-morning soreness were the norm.

25 Years Ago — 1999

Over the summer, Ohio State had received commitments from a pair of players from Stone Mountain, Ga.

There was little fanfare as the Buckeyes took commitments from that city's Corey Adams, a wide receiver, and Jamal Muhammad, a linebacker. But this twosome had been impressive during their senior campaigns, according to coach Bill Harris.

"Things are going real good for these two guys," Harris said. Adams (6-2, 220) transferred into Stone Mountain from Ft. Myers, Fla. He opened the season at receiver, but after a sea-

son-opening loss, he accepted a move to tailback.

"We went down to South Georgia and lost that opening game," Harris said, "Our tailback at the time was a great sprinter, but he was only a 165-pounder. We decided he couldn't take getting the ball 20 or 25 times a game.

"On the way home, our offensive coordinator and myself decided that Corey would be the best guy to carry the load. We decided we would just hand it to him instead of throwing it to him."

20 Years Ago — 2004

Ideally, Lawrence Wilson would have had his recruitment wrapped up by now.

Ohio's No. 13 player, the Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary standout visited what he believed were his top two choices – Notre Dame and Ohio State – the first two weekends of October. After his OSU visit, the second of the two, he said that he hoped to have a decision made within a couple of weeks.

The weekend of Oct. 23, though, Wilson decided to make an official visit to Pitt. The Panthers were the first school to offer Wilson, and he decided to check them out before making up his mind.

Somewhat unexpectedly, the visit only served to make Wilson's decision even harder. He loved his experience in Pittsburgh, and he said he needed a couple more weeks before making a commitment to any of his top three schools.

"It was probably the best visit I've been on so far," Wilson told BSB.

15 Years Ago — 2009

Ohio State's class of 2011 doubled in size on Oct. 29 when head coach Jim Tressel added Canton (Ohio) McKinley four-star defensive end Steve Miller (6-5, 218) to his band of future Buckeyes. The junior became verbal commitment No. 2 in the '11 class when he called Tressel after practice and said he wanted to be a Buckeye.

"Coach Tressel was overjoyed to hear the news," McKinley head coach Ron Johnson told BSB. "I know Steve felt strongly that Ohio State was the place for him, so he decided (Oct. 29) would be a great day to get it done."

After Miller recorded 116 tackles and six sacks for McKinley as a sophomore, Scout had ranked the four-star athlete among the top 100 junior prospects in the country.

10 Years Ago — 2014

For those wondering where the dust might settle between OSU quarterbacks Braxton Miller and J.T. Barrett for the 2015 season, a third quarterback tossed his hat into the ring on Nov. 3.

That afternoon, the Buckeyes received a commitment from Plantation (Fla.) American Heritage four-star quarterback Torrance Gibson (6-4, 207). As one of the most coveted prospects in

the country, Gibson had been pursued by Ohio State for a considerable length of time in his high school career.

Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer won Gibson over in part because of his reaction when the star prospect set foot on OSU's campus.

"When I went on my official visit and he saw me, he started yelling and started getting rowdy," Gibson said after committing. "A coach like that really wants you. He told me he wants me as a quarterback, and I believe him. I can't wait to go to Columbus."

Five Years Ago — 2019

Ohio State landed a commitment on Oct. 31 from Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep four-star wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. (6-4, 184), the son of the NFL Hall of Famer of the same name and teammate of four-star quarterback pledge Kyle McCord (6-3, 215).

Harrison was considered the eighth-best wide receiver and the No. 54 prospect overall in the class of 2021, as he had hauled in 36 passes for 832 yards and 12 touchdowns that season. That included six receptions for 222 yards and four touchdowns in the Hawks' 52-7 win over Wyndmoor La Salle in the Catholic League Class 6A championship on Nov. 9.

Harrison – who first visited Columbus with McCord in February and then returned to campus for the Buckeyes' spring game in April – picked Ohio State over nearly two dozen scholarship offers from programs such as Florida, LSU, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Penn State, Pittsburgh, Rutgers and his father's alma mater, Syracuse, among others.

One Year Ago — 2023

Ohio State had appeared on top all the way through the recruiting process for Houston North Shore five-star cornerback Devin Sanchez (6-2, 170). He was the top-ranked corner in the 2025 class, and momentum was still building toward a potential pledge for Sanchez to the Buckeyes.

247Sports recruiting analyst Steve Wiltfong, known for his "crystal ball predictions" of where recruits will eventually land, predicted on Nov. 2 that Ohio State would win out for the services of Sanchez, the No. 6 prospect in the class.

"Following his visit to Ohio State for the Buckeyes' victory over Penn State, it looked like the Big Ten program also grabbed all the momentum in the sweepstakes to ultimately land Sanchez," Wiltfong wrote. "A few weeks removed from that trip, the Big Ten powerhouse still looks like the one to beat.

"Tim Walton and Perry Eliano continue to lead the charge for Ohio State in recruiting Sanchez. A decision from Sanchez is not expected until after his junior season, but Alabama, Georgia and Texas A&M look like they need to make up ground on the Buckeyes as the blue-chipper continues to work through his process."

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

St. Edward (6-5) at No. 2 Toledo Whitmer (9-2): Four-star offensive tackle Carter Lowe (6-5, 290), a 2025 commit for Ohio State, saw his season come to an end when Whitmer was upset by St. Edward 24-7 on Nov. 8. Lowe has visited for many Buckeye games this season and will now likely be able to make his way back for the final two now that his high school career is over. He is planning on enrolling at Ohio State early and will be on campus in January.

Division I, Region 1 – No. 8 Strongsville (7-4) at No. 1 Mentor (11-0): A 2026 target for Ohio State, four-star linebacker Storm Miller (6-3, 220) wasn't able to overcome the undefeated Cardinals, suffering a 33-0 shutout loss in the second round of the Ohio playoffs. The second round was the furthest Strongsville had made it into the postseason since 2008.

Division I, Region 2 – No. 8 Huber Heights Wayne (6-5) at No. 1 Kettering Fairmont (9-2): One Buckeye target was on the other side of a big upset when Wayne and the No. 6 player in the 2027 class, five-star wide receiver Jamier Brown (5-11, 160), took down No. 1-seeded Fairmont 20-10. Brown and his team advanced to the semifinals of Region 2 and will match up against Hilliard Davidson on Nov. 15, again trying to move on as the lower-ranked team.

Division I, Region 4 – No. 6 Cincinnati St. Xavier (8-3) at No. 3 Cincinnati Winton Woods (10-1): Another Ohio State target pulled off an upset when four-star linebacker Jakobe Clapper (6-2, 196) and St. Xavier beat Winton Woods and former Buckeye target turned Alabama commit four-star defensive end Justin Hill (6-3, 220) by a score of 22-10. They will play No. 2 West Chester Lakota West on Nov. 15.

Division II, Region 5 – No. 7 Uniontown

Lake (9-4) at No. 2 Akron Hoban (9-2): Three-star linebacker Eli Lee (6-3, 230), a 2025 Buckeye commit, and two 2026 OSU targets, five-star cornerback Elbert Hill and four-star offensive tackle Sam Greer (6-7, 310) picked up another playoff win to move onto their region's semifinals with a 21-14 victory. They will face off against No. 3 Macedonia Nordon, looking to extend their season at least one more week.

Division II, Region 6 – No. 8 Olmsted Falls (8-3) at No. 1 Avon (11-0): Four-star athlete Jakob Weatherspoon (5-11, 172), the No. 185 player in the 2026 class, and Avon had another easy win in the Region 6 quarterfinals, beating No. 8 Olmsted Falls 52-35. The competition is only getting tougher for the Eagles, and they will play No. 5 Wadsworth on Nov. 15 to try to keep their undefeated season going.

Division III, Region 9 – No. 9 Cleveland Villa Angela-St. Joseph (8-2) at No. 1 Youngstown Ursuline (10-1): Four-star running back and Ohio State commit Bo Jackson (6-0, 205) watched from the sideline as his Vikings and Buckeye target 2027 tight end D'Angelo White's (6-5, 235) season ended in a 44-8 loss to the No. 1 Fighting Irish. Jackson hasn't publicly said whether he intends to enroll early at Ohio State, but he seems committed to the Buckeyes and the next jersey he wears will likely be scarlet and gray, barring any surprising outcome in his recruitment before the early signing period begins on Dec. 4.

Division III, Region 9 – No. 6 Maple Heights (8-3) at No. 2 Gates Mills Gilmour Academy (11-1): It was another big win for the No. 2 Lancers and four-star tight end Brody Lennon (6-4, 220), a 2025 Buckeye commit, beating Maple Heights 40-6 on Nov. 8. Next up for Gilmour Academy will

be No. 3 Cuyahoga Falls Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy.

Division III, Region 10 – No. 9 Richfield Revere at No. 1 Toledo Central Catholic (9-1): It was also a big win for Central Catholic and four-star cornerback Victor Singleton (6-0, 160), a 2026 target for the Buckeyes and the No. 52 player in his class. They beat Richfield Revere by a score of 48-0. Their next game will be against the 12th-seeded Lexington Minutemen.

Division IV, Region 13 – No. 5 Cleveland Glenville (8-3) at No. 4 Beloit West Branch (11-0): Four-star linebacker Cincere Johnson (6-3, 225) and Glenville beat undefeated West Branch 13-0 on Nov. 8 to move on to the next round of the OHSAA playoffs. Their season continues against No. 1 Mentor Lake Catholic in the semifinals of the region.

Division IV, Region 14 – No. 6 Clyde at No. 3 Ontario (10-1): Four-star wide receiver and 2025 Ohio State commit Bodpegn Miller (6-4, 180), who plays quarterback for Ontario, moved onto the next round with a 36-7 win over Clyde. Now they will match up against No. 2 seed Shelby.

Other Notes And Tidbits

A visitor who was in Columbus for the 35-7 win over Iowa, Charlotte (N.C.) Myers Park four-star defensive end Rodney Dunham (6-4, 227), released his top eight schools, narrowing down his scholarship list of 24 offers. Ohio State was included on that list along with Alabama, Duke, Florida State, Georgia, Notre Dame, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Dunham is the No. 44 prospect in the country, the No. 5 defensive end and the No. 6 player in the state of North Carolina. He was originally offered by Ohio State on Oct. 3.

Another 2026 Buckeye target whittled down his scholarship offer list when Fairburn (Ga.) Langston Hughes four-star running back Carsyn Baker (6-1, 195) narrowed down his list to 13 schools on Nov. 5. The Buckeyes were included on his long list with Alabama, Auburn, Kentucky, Louisville, Miami (Fla.), Ole Miss, Penn State, Pittsburgh, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas A&M, and USC. Baker is being recruited by Locklyn and is the No. 329 player in the 2026 class, the No. 27 running back and the 37th-best player in the state of Georgia.

Douglasville (Ga.) Douglas County five-star wide receiver Devin Carter (6-0, 165) also narrowed down his list, including 11 schools. He is still considering Ohio State along with Alabama, Auburn, Georgia, Miami (Fla.), LSU, Louisville, Ole Miss, Oregon, Texas and Texas A&M. He is the 21st-best player in the class of 2026, the No. 3 wide receiver and the No. 2 player in the state of Georgia.

One more prospect narrowed down his scholarship offers to a slightly less large number when 2027 Arlington (Texas) Lamar linebacker Braylon Williams (6-1, 225) released his top 10 schools. Those 10 are Ohio State, Oklahoma, Ole Miss, Oregon, SMU, Tennessee, Texas, Texas A&M, Utah and Wisconsin. Williams was offered by Ohio State in May, visited Columbus in June for a recruiting camp and came back for a game in the fall as well.

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TIM POND, member of both the Bishop Watterson High School and the Otterbein University Basketball Halls of Fame, recently offered his publication entitled "Coaching Youth Basketball: Coaching the Coaches" for sale on Amazon.com. Access to this instructional manual was previously limited to attendees of his basketball clinics and camps only.

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Four BIG Teams Featured In First CFP Bracket

The Big Ten was well represented in the first projected 12-team College Football Playoff bracket of the 2024 season that was unveiled live on ESPN on Nov. 5.

BIG TEN NOTES
Patrick Engels

Four teams from the new-look Big Ten were featured in the bracket, tied with the SEC for the most out of any conference.

Leading the pack in the conference as well as the entire nation was No. 1 Oregon, which earned a first-round bye and the top-rated seed in the projected bracket with what was a perfect 9-0 record and a 6-0 mark in the Big Ten at the time the rankings were released.

The Ducks, who will earn an automatic first-round bye in the playoff if they win the Big Ten championship, were projected to play the winner of No. 8 Indiana and No. 9 Tennessee in the quarterfinal round.

The Hoosiers, like the Ducks, entered the first rankings release with a 9-0 record and 6-0 mark in Curt Cignetti's first year leading the program, their best start in program history.

In between Oregon and Indiana from the Big Ten in the bracket was No. 5 seed Ohio State, which, despite being the No. 2 overall ranked team in the first CFP rankings release with what was a 7-1 record and 4-1 mark in the Big Ten at the time, is the highest-rated seed in the first round of the playoff.

The Buckeyes are in the No. 5 slot as of now because there cannot be two teams from the same conference within the top four, with each of the Big Ten, SEC, ACC and Big 12 taking one of the four first-round byes. Because of this, Ohio State was projected to play against No. 12 seed Boise

State in Columbus in the first round of the bracket held on either Dec. 20 or Dec. 21.

If they were to advance past Heisman Trophy front-runner Ashton Jeanty and the Broncos, the Buckeyes would play No. 4 seed but No. 9 ranked BYU at a neutral-site matchup in the quarterfinals and then potentially Oregon in the semifinal in a rematch of their Oct. 12 game.

The final Big Ten team featured in the 12-team bracket was Penn State, which was seeded No. 7 in both the bracket and the rankings with what then was a 7-1 record and 4-1 mark in the Big Ten. The Nittany Lions, despite coming off a home loss to Ohio State on Nov. 2, were still projected to host a College Football Playoff first-round game, welcoming No. 10 seed Notre Dame to Beaver Stadium in what would be a marquee matchup between two storied programs.

The projected bracket had Penn State potentially squaring off with No. 2 Georgia in the quarterfinals if it were to beat the Fighting Irish, and then the winner of No. 3 Miami and either No. 6 Texas or No. 11 Alabama in the semifinals if it were to beat the Bulldogs on a neutral site.

With no other Big Ten teams featured in the CFP top 25, Oregon, Ohio State, Penn State and Indiana are likely the only Big Ten teams who could find themselves in the official 12-team bracket when it is revealed on Dec. 8 with not much time left to make up ground.

Nebraska Hires Holgorsen As Offensive Consultant

Nebraska brought in a longtime college head coach to help reignite its sputtering offense on Nov. 5, adding Dana Holgorsen to Matt Rhule's staff as an offensive consultant. He will work with the offensive staff in a role that will evolve as the season goes on, according to ESPN's Pete Thamel.

Holgorsen joins Rhule's staff after serving the same role for TCU this season. The 53-year-old will bring a key veteran voice to Nebraska's offense and true freshman Dylan

Raiola, having spent the last 13 seasons as head coach for both West Virginia (2011-18) and Houston (2019-23).

During his time with the Mountaineers and Cougars, Holgorsen was best known as an elite developer of quarterbacks and an innovative offensive mind. While at West Virginia, Holgorsen led several air-raid Mountaineer offenses that ranked among the nation's best, including his 2012 team that had now-Seattle Seahawks starting quarterback Geno Smith and former NFL wideouts Tavon Austin and Stedman Bailey scoring 39.5 points per game, ninth best in the nation.

Holgorsen did not have the same success at Houston, going just 31-28 in his five seasons compared to the 61-41 in eight years at West Virginia, but he still molded some standout throwers, including Clayton Tune, who threw for an American Athletic Conference-leading 4,074 yards and 40 touchdowns his senior season with the Cougars in 2022.

Holgorsen's quarterback expertise should be a welcome sight for Raiola, who, after getting out to a strong start to his collegiate career, has struggled during Big Ten play.

After completing an impressive 100 of his 142 passing attempts (70.4 percent) for 1,224 yards and nine touchdowns to just two interceptions in his first five games, the five-star has hit a wall in his last four, completing just 58.5 percent of his passes (76 of 130) for 697 yards and just one touchdown to six interceptions.

Raiola's struggles have caused Nebraska to struggle from the offensive side of the ball, averaging just 14.5 points per game since the beginning of October, a span during which the Huskers have produced just one win in four games.

USC Benches QB Moss For Backup Maiava

USC's season of disappointment continued Nov. 5 when head coach Lincoln Riley announced that the team is benching starting quarterback Miller Moss for backup Jayden Maiava for their Nov. 16 game against Nebraska.

The Trojans, who had an off week Nov. 9, made the decision to bench Moss after the redshirt junior threw three interceptions while completing 30 of his 50 passes for 293 passing yards and two touchdowns in the Trojans' 26-21 road loss to Washington on Nov. 2, the team's fourth defeat in the last five games.

"When we went back and looked at it, we felt like it was in the best interest of the team to give Jayden a chance here," Riley said of the decision. "This is not a reflection of anything more than we have another good player in the room and we feel like he gives us a good opportunity. It's really that simple."

Moss's benching is a disappointing development for a Trojans team who thought they may have had their heir apparent to 2022 Heisman Trophy winner and now-Chicago Bears quarterback Caleb Williams. After throwing for six touchdowns and 372 passing yards to lead the Trojans to a 42-28 Holiday Bowl win over Louisville in his first career start last December, Moss earned the starting job for the 2024 season and made

BIG 2024 Standings

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Indiana	7	0	1.000	10	0	1.000
Oregon	7	0	1.000	10	0	1.000
Ohio State	5	1	.833	8	1	.889
Penn State	5	1	.833	8	1	.889
Iowa	4	3	.571	6	4	.600
Minnesota	4	3	.571	6	4	.600
Illinois	3	3	.500	6	3	.667
Wisconsin	3	3	.500	5	4	.556
Washington	3	4	.429	5	5	.500
Michigan	3	4	.429	5	5	.500
UCLA	3	4	.429	4	5	.444
Nebraska	2	4	.333	5	4	.556
Rutgers	2	4	.333	5	4	.556
Michigan State	2	4	.333	4	5	.444
Northwestern	2	4	.333	4	5	.444
USC	2	5	.286	4	5	.444
Maryland	1	5	.167	4	5	.444
Purdue	0	6	.000	1	8	.111

Nov. 8 Game
UCLA 20, Iowa 17

Nov. 9 Games
Rutgers 26, Minnesota 19
Ohio State 45, Purdue 0
Indiana 20, Michigan 15
Oregon 39, Maryland 18
Penn State 35, Washington 6

Nov. 15 Game
UCLA at Washington, 9 p.m.

Nov. 16 Games
Penn State at Purdue, 3:30 p.m.
Rutgers at Maryland, 6 p.m.
Oregon at Wisconsin, 7:30 p.m.
Michigan State at Illinois, 2:30 p.m.
Ohio State at Northwestern, Noon
Nebraska at USC, 4 p.m.

All times Eastern

the most of that opportunity early on.

He made a statement to the college football world in Week 1 by completing 27 of his 36 passes for 378 passing yards and a touchdown in USC's 27-20 win over then-No. 13 LSU, which propelled the Trojans all the way to No. 11 in the Week 3 AP top 25 poll.

But since then, Moss has been less than stellar at quarterback. Since its 48-40 win over Utah State on Sept. 7, Moss has thrown an interception in all but one of USC's last seven games, including the previously mentioned three-pick outing on Nov. 2 and a two-interception performance in the Trojans' 24-17 road loss to Minnesota on Oct. 5.

USC, which entered Week 12 with a 4-5 record and 2-5 mark in the Big Ten, will now look to turn its season around behind the redshirt sophomore Maiava, a transfer from UNLV who threw for 3,085 passing yards and 17 touchdowns last year for the Running Rebels.

Maiava, a Palolo, Hawaii, native, has completed eight of his 11 pass attempts this season for 66 yards and no scores, but he does have dual-threat capabilities with 27 yards rushing and a score on just three carries.

Lanning Expects WR Johnson Back This Season

Oregon head coach Dan Lanning ex-



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BIG TEN NOTES

pressed confidence in his star wideout Tez Johnson returning to the Ducks' lineup at some point this season despite him going down with a shoulder injury in Week 10, saying on Nov. 4 that Johnson's injury is not as severe as they originally thought.

"(Johnson) will be down right now in the near future, but I do anticipate getting Tez back," Lanning said.

Johnson exited No. 1 Oregon's 38-17 win over Michigan just two plays into the Ducks' first offensive drive of the game when Wolverines defensive back Wesley Walker drove the senior into the ground on an 11-yard pass, causing all of Johnson's body weight to fall on his right shoulder.

He would not return to the game but could be seen on the Oregon sideline in the first half wearing street clothes and a sling on his right arm.

Johnson's injury, which CBS speculated during the game could be a broken collarbone or separated shoulder, caused major concern for Ducks fans, and those worries only added up when he posted to his Instagram a story with no words and just a broken heart emoji.

But those concerns seem to have gone away, at least in the immediate future, after Lanning provided a more positive update on his wideout's health.

Johnson sat out for Oregon's 39-18 win over Maryland on Nov. 9, and it was unclear as BSB went to press when he may return. The Ducks have just two regular-season games remaining before a likely Big Ten Championship Game appearance in December, playing at Wisconsin on Nov. 16 before

hosting former Pac-12 rival Washington on Nov. 30 to close out the regular season.

If Johnson is to be held out through the rest of the regular season, it would be a significant loss for a Ducks offense that has been operating with ease all season, averaging 35.7 points and 457.0 yards per game, marks that rank third and first in the Big Ten and 19th and 11th nationally.

Oregon's explosive offense has helped propel the Ducks to the No. 1 overall spot in the first College Football Playoff rankings released on Nov. 5, and Johnson has played a big part in that success. Even with him missing all but two plays in the last two games, his 64 catches still rank ninth in the nation and are 27 more than the second-highest Duck receiver, and his 649 receiving yards and eight touchdowns are also team highs.

Penn State Whiteout Televised On IMAX

No. 6 Penn State's 35-6 win over Washington on Nov. 9 marked the Nittany Lions' annual "whiteout" game at Beaver Stadium, and fans who were not watching in the stadium or on television got the opportunity to take in the atmosphere from the big screen.

The Nittany Lions' matchup against the Huskies was broadcast live in 23 IMAX theaters across the country, allowing college football fans to see the sights and sounds from what was a raucous crowd at Beaver Stadium in a movie-like setting with premium sound and clearer visuals.

This marked the first-ever college football game presented live in IMAX, which partnered with NBC Sports to make the air-

ing happen. NBC Sports also aired the game exclusively on Peacock.

IMAX's airing of the game stems from the company's push toward "expanding and diversifying its content portfolio, broadening the scope of the IMAX Experience beyond Hollywood Films." IMAX and NBC Sports already teamed up to stream the 2024 Paris Olympics Opening Ceremony on July 26 to over 100 IMAX locations nationwide, so it is likely that more college football games – especially those on NBC, with which the Big Ten has a seven-year contract that runs through the 2028-29 season – could be streamed in the future.

Fans from eight different states could have viewed the game in IMAX, with it being streamed in seven theaters in both Washington and Pennsylvania, three in New Jersey, two in Illinois and one each in California, Maryland, Florida and New York.

Knicks Sign Buie To Two-Way Deal

Northwestern's all-time men's basketball leading scorer, Boo Buie, has earned a two-way NBA contract with the New York Knicks, according to ESPN Senior NBA Insider Shams Charania.

Buie, an Albany, N.Y., native, earns the deal with his home-state NBA team after briefly spending time on the Knicks' training camp roster, signing with the franchise on Oct. 7 before being quickly waived two days later.

Before that, Buie, who went undrafted in June, earned an invite to the Phoenix Suns' Summer League squad, where he averaged

9.0 points, 1.4 rebounds and 2.0 assists on a mere 32.6 percent shooting (29.6 percent from three) in five games.

Buie's performance with the Suns did not earn him an invite onto their NBA roster, but he now has a chance to kick-start his professional career with New York on either its NBA or G-League team.

Under NBA rules, players on two-way deals are allowed to play a maximum of 50 NBA games and cannot be on the playoff roster. This means Buie will be simultaneously on the rosters of the Knicks' professional squad and G-League affiliate Westchester Knicks this season. As BSB went to press, Buie had yet to suit up for either team.

Regardless, the Knicks are getting a pure scorer and shot maker who is coming off one of the most successful careers by a guard in recent Big Ten memory. Buie played in 149 games for Northwestern during his five-year collegiate career (2019-24) and started 128 of them, scoring a program-record 2,187 total points along with 417 rebounds, 618 assists and 143 steals on 40.4 percent shooting, 35.3 percent from three.

Buie's triumphs at Northwestern, which included consecutive first-team All-Big Ten selections in 2022-23 and 2023-24, also translated to some team success for the Wildcats. After Northwestern went just 32-54 (16-43 in Big Ten) his first three seasons, Buie helped propel the Wildcats to Big Ten and national relevance, taking his team to back-to-back NCAA Tournaments for the first time in program history with a combined 44-24 record (24-16 in Big Ten) from 2022-24.

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Diebler Praises "Closer" Thornton After UT Win

In previous seasons, Ohio State has often had issues closing out games, with the Buckeyes taking several early leads before squandering them late in the second half.

COURT REPORT Patrick Engels

Those blown leads were often a product of the team not having a player they could count on to put the ball in the basket when the going gets tough and the rest of the offense going stagnant. But this season, Ohio State may have found that missing element.

In Ohio State's 80-72 season-opening upset win over No. 19 Texas on Nov. 4, junior guard and likely three-time team captain Bruce Thornton took matters into his own hands with the game on the line, scoring his team's final nine points to carry the Buckeyes to the eight-point win.

Thornton began to take control of the game after Texas had cut Ohio State's lead to seven points, 71-64, with 4:32 remaining off of two made free throws from Longhorns forward Kadin Shedrick. Just 33 seconds later, the preseason All-Big Ten guard gave momentum right back for the Buckeyes when he took Texas guard Chendall Weaver into the paint on a drive, pivoted multiple times, and laid in a contested left-handed layup for a three-point play.

This seemed to springboard Thornton for the rest of the night. The guard added two more two-pointers in the paint with 2:49 and 1:54 left, both of which helped extend the Buckeyes' lead to 12, then tacked on a pair of free throws with 53 seconds remaining to bring the advantage to 12, 80-68, once more.

Thornton's superb end to the game allowed him to finish with a team-high 20 points on an efficient 7-of-10 shooting on the night, a strong start to what could be another All-Big Ten sea-

son for the junior. But maybe more importantly, it helped the Buckeyes put a talented Longhorn team away and come out of Las Vegas with an early-season ranked win.

Diebler acknowledged after the game that Thornton could have had an even better night if he had been more aggressive during the first half. But regardless, the coach said the way his veteran leader put the game away is a welcome sight for him and his team and hopefully a sign of things to come for the rest of the season.

"It's great. It's great," Diebler said when asked what it's like to have a closer like Thornton on the team. "I felt like he passed up a couple shots in the paint earlier in the game and made some really good adjustments. He got downhill a little quicker as the game went on, and that opened up some things for us.

"But listen, there's no point guard I'd rather have in the country to close out a game than Bruce Thornton. He plays with such poise and toughness and confidence."

Thornton scored six points in the first half on 2-of-4 shooting.

Diebler Unloads Bench In Season Opener

Thornton was not the only Buckeye who made his presence felt in Sin City.

Ohio State and Diebler also got meaningful production up and down their lineup during the season-opening win, with eight players finding the score sheet at some point in the game and four players reaching double figures, those being Thornton with 20, fifth-year wing Micah Parrish with 17, sophomore forward Devin Royal with 16 and true freshman guard John Mobley Jr. with 14.

Ohio State's ability to get production from all shapes and sizes on the court – from the most experienced player on the team in Parrish to the least experienced in Mobley – is a testament to the depth and versatility the Buckeyes have on their 2024-25 roster. This is especially true when it comes to their bench. The five reserves Diebler brought onto the court at some point in the game combined to account for 33 points – albeit Royal and Mobley combining for 30 of them – much higher than the Longhorns' 10.

Diebler said after the game that having his bench players producing when their numbers are called can be a great luxury for his team moving forward this season because it can allow them to mix and match with multiple different lineups, potentially keeping opposing teams on their toes throughout each game.

"Going into this season, I felt depth was a real strength for us," Diebler said. "We have a couple more guys who are ready to play. It's just hard to get everybody in there. But I thought depth was a real strength. Obviously, when you have guys like Devin Royal and John Mobley who can come in and create offense for you quickly, that certainly helps.

"And it allows us some versatility from a lineup standpoint so we can adjust – maybe offensively or defensively – to what the opposing team is doing. So having an ability to do that in-game as a coach is really comforting, knowing that you have a deep bench."

Ohio State used 10 of its 15 active players on the roster – not counting sophomore guard Taison Chatman, who is out for the season with a torn ACL – with nine of them

OSU Men's Basketball Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2025 who have issued a verbal commitment to play basketball at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
A'mare Bynum	C	6-8	210	★★★★	Branson (Mo.) Link Academy
Dorian Jones	G	6-4	160	★★★★	Richmond Heights, Ohio

OSU Men's Basketball Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2026 who have issued a verbal commitment to play basketball at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Marcus Johnson	G	6-1	175	★★★★	Garfield Heights, Ohio
Alex Smith	F	6-9	195	N/A	Upper Arlington, Ohio

logging more than nine minutes of action. While these numbers can certainly help Diebler continue to instill a fast-paced and up-tempo style of play, he said that it is still too early to tell if playing double-digit players will be the norm moving forward this season.

"I think we have to get some more games under our belt and collect some more data," Diebler said. "I want to play a deep rotation."

Royal's Shooting Could Be Factor This Season

Last season, then-freshman forward Devin Royal connected on just three of his 20 tries from beyond the arc, making most of his impact inside the paint in his first collegiate season with the Buckeyes.

With that in mind, the Pickerington (Ohio) Central product made improving as a perimeter shooter his No. 1 point of emphasis this offseason, devoting countless time with his coaches to fine-tuning his shot.

All that extra work seemed to have paid off in the season opener against Texas. In 25 minutes of action, Royal made two of his four attempts from long range – including his first attempt of the season – almost eclipsing his entire freshman season total in just one game.

When asked about his shooting success against the Longhorns, which also included a contested midrange jumper in the first half and a fadeaway shot from just beyond the paint, Royal said it was a testament to the hard work he put in toward improving his shooting stroke during the summer and fall months, efforts that only increased his confidence as a scorer as the months went on.

"I think I just gained more (confidence) in my shot throughout the summer," Royal said. "So just having more confidence in my shot, building on that and being able to hit open shots – that will be big for us."

Like Royal, Diebler also talked about the importance of having his sophomore forward step out a few times a game to hit a long-range or three-point jumper. He said that Royal's status as a mere threat to shoot can help his team space the floor more on offense, potentially giving the Buckeye guards more of an open lane to drive or kick off the dribble.

"His ability to space the floor for us is going to be really important," Diebler said. "You don't have to shoot 50 percent from three to do that. You have to be a threat, and he is that, make no mistake."

Diebler acknowledged that Royal will likely not shoot at a 50.0 percent clip from three every game, but regardless, he thinks the former Ohio Mr. Basketball winner deserves to be rewarded this season for the commitment he made this offseason to improving his game.

"He's worked hard at it, I think that's the thing I'm most proud of," Diebler said. "Especially this last month, he has locked in at a really high level. And when you see guys do that and spend the extra time – you just want results and to kind of validate that for him.

"I was really just happy for him to get that validation. Because I believe he can do it. I think now he's believing he can do it, and it changes the dynamic of our spacing now that he can do that for us. And I anticipate he'll be able to do that all season."

Oden Said He And Conley Might Have Returned

Ohio State's last national championship appearance occurred in 2007 when the Greg Oden and Mike Conley-led Buckeyes fell to top-seeded Florida 84-75.

That loss marked the end of the quick but memorable era for the one-and-done stars Oden and Conley, who would both end up being selected within the top four of the 2007 NBA draft. But according to the former Buckeye All-America center, Ohio State's single-season run at that elusive national title could have very well stretched into the next year.

Appearing on the podcast "Glory Daze," hosted by former Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback Johnny Manziel, Oden said that both he and Conley thought long and hard about returning for their respective sophomore seasons in 2007-08 to continue their chase for a national championship with the Buckeyes, and at least for Oden, that was a real possibility until he realized he was becoming too notable on campus.

"No," Oden said when asked by Manziel if he thought he was going to enter the NBA draft after the national championship game. "I promise you, I did not know I was leaving until I couldn't walk to class."

Oden, who also mentioned to Manziel that Ohio State's 2007 team would have made \$3 million in NIL earnings in today's era of college basketball, said that both he and Conley seriously considered returning to campus that next season because they felt they had a clear path at getting back to the national championship and this time winning it all, especially because the two-time national champion Florida Gators – then-led by future NBA players Al Horford and Joakim Noah – had lost many of their players to the NBA.

"(Conley) and Coach (Thad) Matta were like, 'You're not coming back. What are you talking about? You're going to be the No. 1 f—g draft pick,'" he said. "After the tournament, (Conley) wanted to come back as well. We wanted to run it back. (Florida) just won two



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Ohio State Upsets No. 19 Texas In Season Opener

By PATRICK ENGELS

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

The Jake Diebler era for the Ohio State men's basketball team is off to a hot start.

Flying across the country to Las Vegas for their 2024-25 season opener to face off against No. 19 Texas on Nov. 4, the Buckeyes (1-0) seemed unfazed and ready for the moment, handily defeating the Longhorns (0-1) 80-72 in front of a sparse T-Mobile Arena crowd of 6,397 behind some outstanding three-point shooting and a strong defensive effort.

The Buckeyes led wire to wire for their first ranked victory to open a season in program history by shooting an impressive 14 of 28 (50.0 percent) from beyond the arc, including 10 of 17 in the first half, the most threes made before halftime for the Buckeyes since at least 1998.

They also were strong on the defensive end, limiting Texas to just 36.8 percent shooting (25 of 68) from the field and just 26.0 percent from three (7 of 27), while they also held a 33-10 advantage in bench points and a 40-38 edge on the glass.

"I was just proud," Diebler said after the game. "There aren't very many programs across the country who signed up to play a game like this on day one of the college basketball season. I was proud of our guys. They showed up under the bright lights on a huge stage."

Ohio State made its presence felt on the national stage from the start. Boasting a new-look starting lineup that consisted of guards Meechie Johnson Jr., Micah Parrish and Bruce Thornton and forwards Aaron Bradshaw and Sean Stewart, the Buckeyes hit on five of their first eight shots of the game – three of those makes being from long distance – to jump out to an early 14-7 lead before the first media timeout.

Texas would start to settle in after the first break, cutting the deficit to three on two separate occasions at 15:12 (14-11) and 11:25 (21-18), but it was the continued sizzling three-point shooting that kept Ohio State in front. Despite the Longhorns battling back, the Buckeyes would make each of their next five attempts from beyond the arc after that first media timeout to help them take a 33-18 lead with 6:24 left in the period.

True freshman guard John Mobley Jr. was the main catalyst behind this sequence. After entering the game with 14:29 left, he made each of his first three attempts from beyond the arc to begin his collegiate career.

"I love his aggressive mentality and mindset," Diebler said of Mobley. "I recruit-

Buckeyes have reportedly made a push for Branson (Mo.) Link Academy four-star 2025 combo guard Davion Hannah (6-5, 175) in the days since losing out on Napa (Calif.) Prolific Prep five-star Darryn Peterson (6-5, 195) to Kansas on Nov. 1. According to On3's Jamie Shaw, the Buckeyes are now "worth paying attention to" for the nation's 33rd-best prospect and seventh-best shooting guard, although Missouri and Cincinnati still have the inside track to land him. The Buckeyes do have a notable upper hand on those two programs

ed him, and I believe in what he can do. He plays with a freedom and a confidence that's going to be really important for our team."

The Longhorns did not let Mobley's magic deter them, though. After Ohio State took the 33-18 lead off two Stewart free throws, Rodney Terry's team went on an extended 13-3 run – aided by a 1-of-9 stretch for Ohio State – to pull within five, 36-31, with just 1:50 left in the first half, forcing a Diebler timeout.

Much like Ohio State's run, the Longhorn sequence was fueled by their own true freshman guard, former five-star Tre Johnson, who scored eight of those 13 points, six of those coming on two three-pointers.

Diebler's timeout seemed to reset the Buckeyes on both ends. They got a pull-up jumper from Devin Royal and a resounding block by Stewart on a Ze'rik Onyema attempted dunk to enter the locker room at half with a 38-31 lead.

Ohio State came out of the locker room with a different approach on offense, scoring its first eight points of the half inside the paint to put it back up 46-39 with 15:49 left. Then Mobley struck again, with the freshman connecting on his fourth three of the night and two free throws to guide the Buckeyes to a 51-40 advantage.

Texas was poised for another rally, though. Helped by a 2-of-6 stretch for Ohio State that also included three turnovers, the Longhorns scored 18 of the next 28 points in nearly seven minutes of action to find themselves down just three, 61-58, with 7:34 left after a Kadin Shedrick dunk.

But the Buckeyes remained resilient. Parrish immediately responded to Shedrick's dunk with a three on the next possession, igniting a 10-1 sequence for Ohio State that put the game back in its control, leading 71-59 with 5:13 remaining following a Royal three.

Texas broke the run with another Johnson three, and two Shedrick free throws to cut it to 71-64, but the Longhorns' hope for a comeback was wiped away by some late-game heroics from Thornton. The veteran guard scored Ohio State's final nine points of the game on three layups and three free throws to help put the game out of reach for Texas and give his team a statement season-opening win.

"I felt the collective toughness (of the team)," Diebler said after the game. "No one tried to do hero ball to stop a run. We worked together and we stayed true to our principles on both sides. And I felt like that was a big reason why we were able to hold them off and keep them from breaking through."

because they recently earned a commitment from Hannah's Link Academy teammate, four-star 2025 center Amare Bynum (6-8, 210) on Oct. 22.

• As for the bad, Shaw also reported that Kentucky has emerged as the "leader in the clubhouse" for Atlanta Holy Innocents Episcopal School five-star power forward Caleb Wilson (6-9, 205). Wilson, the nation's fifth-ranked prospect and third-best power forward, recently took a visit to Ohio State on the weekend of Oct. 26, but it appears the Buck-

Ohio State 80, Texas 72

Nov. 4, 2024

T-Mobile Arena • Las Vegas

	1	2	F
Ohio State (1-0)	38	42	80
Texas (0-1)	31	41	72

Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D			
Thornton	36	7-10	3-3	0-5	5	2	20
Parrish	30	5-11	4-5	0-6	5	1	17
Johnson	30	2-11	0-0	0-4	3	3	6
Bradshaw	21	1-5	0-0	0-1	0	4	2
Stewart	13	0-3	2-2	0-4	2	4	2
Royal	24	7-11	0-0	2-1	0	1	16
Mobley Jr.	13	4-6	2-2	0-1	0	2	14
Mahaffey	15	1-1	1-2	4-4	0	0	3
Glover	11	0-1	0-0	1-0	1	2	0
Parks	7	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	0	0
Totals	200	27-60	12-14	11-29	16	19	80

Percentages: FG: 45.0%. FT: 85.7%. **Three-point field goals:** 14-28 (Johnson 2-7, Parrish 3-6, Royal 2-4, Thornton 3-4, Mobley 4-4, Bradshaw 0-2, Stewart 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 5. **Blocked shots:** 2 (Bradshaw, Stewart). **Turnovers:** 15 (Parrish 3, Johnson 3, Thornton 2, Stewart 2, Glover 2, Royal, Parks, Team). **Steals:** 2 (Johnson, Royal).

Texas	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D			
Johnson	39	10-20	4-5	0-5	4	3	29
Shedrick	31	4-12	2-2	4-1	0	1	10
Kaluma	30	4-7	2-4	4-1	0	1	10
Weaver	34	3-10	2-3	2-6	4	4	8
Pope	22	2-8	0-0	0-2	2	0	5
Larry	23	2-4	3-4	0-3	5	0	8
Kent	16	0-4	2-2	1-0	0	3	2
Onyema	5	0-3	0-0	0-1	0	2	0
Totals	200	25-68	15-20	16-22	15	14	72

Percentages: FG: 36.8%. FT: 75.0%. **Three-point field goals:** 7-27 (Johnson 5-10, Pope 1-5, Kent 0-3, Larry 1-3, Shedrick 0-2, Kaluma 0-2, Weaver 0-2). **Team rebounds:** 8. **Blocked shots:** 2 (Johnson, Onyema). **Turnovers:** 9 (Kaluma 3, Larry 2, Johnson, Shedrick, Weaver, Pope). **Steals:** 5 (Johnson 2, Weaver, Pope, Larry). **Officials:** Daly, Green, Kimble. **Attendance:** 6,397.

Thornton's final nine points were part of his team-high 20-point and five-assist performance on an efficient 7-of-10 shooting from the field (3-of-4 from three). He was one of four Buckeyes in double figures, including Parrish (17), Royal (16) and Mobley (14), who finished his first collegiate game a perfect 4-of-4 shooting from three.

Texas was led in the win by the freshman Johnson, who scored 29 points in his debut on 10-of-20 shooting. He broke former Longhorn Kevin Durant's freshman debut scoring record of 20 points set on Nov. 9, 2007.

Ohio State will play two games before BSB goes to press again, hosting Youngstown State on Nov. 11 (6 p.m., BTN) for its home opener and then traveling to No. 13 Texas A&M on Nov. 15 (9 p.m., SEC Network) to close out a home-and-home series between the two programs.

eyes may not be among the favorites to land the five-star as Shaw did not mention Ohio State as a team that is in the mix and instead said Arkansas and head coach John Calipari are the biggest threat to the Wildcats. Calipari may have the upper hand on his former school, as recent pledge Washington (D.C.) Sidwell Francis School four-star point guard Acaden Lewis (6-2, 170) said upon committing that he is definitely recruiting Wilson to join him at Kentucky.

in a row, those guys are leaving. If we made it here (to the national championship game), we can get back there.

"We definitely did (feel like we had more left in the tank). We just always wanted to win. That was our thing. We didn't care about the numbers, didn't care about anything. As long as we won, we were good. I definitely wanted to come back, but as you (Manziel) know, sometimes you have to leave and (make some money)."

In the end, both Oden and Conley departed Columbus for the NBA that offseason, with Oden going No. 1 overall in the 2007 NBA draft to Portland and Conley No. 4 to the Memphis Grizzlies. Since then, though, the former Buckeyes have had nearly opposite professional careers.

Oden's NBA career lasted just 105 games over three seasons while dealing with several lower-body injuries, leading him to instead embark on a coaching career, in which he has served as a graduate assistant for his alma mater Ohio State in 2021-22 and a director of basketball operations/assistant coach for Matta-led Butler from 2022-24 until he left his position with the Bulldogs to pursue other business ventures.

Meanwhile, Conley is in the midst of his 18th NBA season and is the starting point guard on a Minnesota Timberwolves team that in 2024-25 has championship aspirations. He is a one-time All-Star and All-Defensive team selection and a four-time sportsmanship award winner.

As for Ohio State, Matta's team failed to make the NCAA Tournament the season after Conley and Oden departed, going 24-13 and 10-8 in the Big Ten. Matta would rebound soon after, though, earning a berth to the Big Dance in the next seven seasons – including one Final Four appearance in 2011-12 – before being relieved of his duties following the 2016-17 season when Chris Holtmann took over.

Notes And Tidbits

- Several former Buckeyes who transferred away from the program this offseason made their respective debuts for their new teams since BSB last went to press. Perhaps the most productive debut of those former Buckeyes was now-Dayton center Zed Key, who helped power the Flyers to an 85-57 win over St. Francis on Nov. 4 by totaling 14 points, six rebounds and three blocks on a perfect 4-of-4 shooting. Key's 14 points were his most in a game since scoring 16 on 6-of-8 shooting in Ohio State's nonconference win over New Orleans last December. Guard Roddy Gayle Jr. also had a solid first game for his new team, Ohio State's archrival Michigan. He earned a start for Dusty May's new team and netted 13 points, four assists and two steals in the Wolverines' blowout 101-53 victory over Cleveland State on Nov. 4. Former Ohio State center Felix Okpara also earned a season-opening start for his new team, Tennessee, scoring just two points but adding a team-high nine rebounds and a block in the Volunteers' 80-64 win over Gardner-Webb on Nov. 4, while guards Scotty Middleton (Seton Hall) and Bowen Hardman (Akron) both scored three points on a combined 2-of-9 shooting in their two new programs' narrow Nov. 4 wins over Saint Peter's and Arkansas State, respectively.

- Ohio State received both good and bad news on the recruiting front since BSB last went to press. Starting with the good, the

McMahon Displays Perimeter Shooting Vs. CSU

Ohio State junior forward Cotie McMahon has shown she can do many things on a basketball court during her two years with the Buckeyes, but up until the team's 104-69 season-opening win against Cleveland State on Nov. 5, making four three-point shots in a single game wasn't one of them.

In the game against the Vikings, McMahon wasn't often the bruising force attacking the rim that she has become known for. The Centerville, Ohio, native still made a couple of two-point baskets but scored the majority of her points from long range, where she connected on a career-high four three-point makes in five attempts.

McMahon made some three-point shots in her first two years with the Buckeyes, but she didn't do so at a very efficient rate, shooting 23.0 percent from beyond the arc as a sophomore and 26.3 percent as a freshman.

According to McMahon, her three-point shooting was a point of emphasis over the

offseason.

"It was very clear what I needed to work on as far as my game, but during the offseason, I was just getting shots up, making sure that I built a routine for myself as far as getting in the gym before practice getting shots up," McMahon said.

**DOUBLE
DRIBBLE
Bobby Gorbett**

McMahon wasted little time getting off to a good start in her junior season, making her first three-point attempt with 5:38 left in the first quarter off a good find from freshman point guard Jalon Cambridge.

She drained her second triple one quarter later before making two more in the

OSU Women's Basketball Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2025 who have issued a verbal commitment to play basketball at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Stars	High School/Previous Team
Daria Biriuk	G	6-1	★★★★	Bell Buckle (Tenn.) The Webb School

third period, helping the Buckeyes take away remaining hope from the overmatched Vikings.

The common thread between all of McMahon's attempts was that they came from assists by her teammates, and they were also fairly uncontested, which, according to head coach Kevin McGuff, was instrumental in her success.

"The key is the shots she took were really good shots," McGuff said. "She was open, she had her feet set and all that, and she was in rhythm. So hopefully she can be efficient from the three-point line, because if she can do that and people have to come guard her there, then obviously it opens it up for her to drive the ball."

Sheldon Returns To OSU For Season Opener

For many Buckeye fans, not seeing former All-America point guard Jacy Sheldon on the court was a bittersweet moment. Luckily for fans of the team and the program itself, Sheldon wasn't far from the court at all. In fact, she was one of 4,828 spectators at Value City Arena for the season opener.

Sheldon, now with the WNBA's Dallas Wings, had been a backcourt staple for the

Buckeyes during the previous five seasons.

She started 24 games at point guard for the Buckeyes as a freshman in 2019-20, a season in which she averaged 9.6 points and 1.5 assists per game. She took her game to the next level her sophomore year in 2020-21, leading Ohio State in scoring with 16.7 points per game, and did the same as a junior with 19.7 points while also recording a team-high 4.2 assists per contest.

After missing most of her senior season with a lower-leg injury, Sheldon used her extra year of eligibility to return for a fifth season with the Scarlet and Gray, one in which she led the team in scoring (17.8) and assists (3.8) once more while earning AP second-team All-America honors.

Sheldon said goodbye to her long Buckeye career at the end of the 2023-24 campaign after leading the team to 26 wins and a Big Ten regular-season championship but said hello to the WNBA when the Wings selected her a few weeks later with the No. 5 overall pick in the 2024 WNBA draft.

Sheldon played in all 40 games in her rookie season with the Wings, starting in 26 of them, while recording 5.4 points, 2.5 assists and 2.1 rebounds per game. Dallas and Sheldon went an abysmal 9-31 in 2024,

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good for second-to-last in the WNBA.

Sheldon's sister, Emmy, who became nearly as famous as Jacy around Columbus for her affinity for the women's basketball team, joined her older sister in observing the Buckeyes' win.

According to McGuff, the Buckeyes were grateful to have the Sheldons nearby.

"Obviously their family is very important to our program, and we'll be connected with them forever, so it was fun to have them here," McGuff said.

Mikesell Competes In 3-on-3 Development Camp

Sheldon's former backcourt mate from 2021-23, guard Taylor Mikesell, took her first step to representing her country when she competed in the 2024 United States 3-on-3 Women's National Team Development camp from Nov. 8-10 in Phoenix. Mikesell was one of 13 athletes named to the roster by the USA Basketball Women's 3-on-3 National Team Committee.

Mikesell, who played and started in each of her 68 games for Ohio State from 2021-23, is no stranger to Team USA. Her relationship with the program began in 2015 when she took part in trials for the 2015 USA U16 Women's National Team, and she then played for the Red, White and Blue in the 2016 U17 World Cup, averaging 5.0 points and 1.2 rebounds per game to help Team USA to a bronze medal.

Mikesell last played for Team USA in 2019, when she participated in both the Red Bull USA Basketball 3-on-3 Nationals in Las Vegas and the U.S. Pan American Games, helping the U.S. to a silver medal in the second event by averaging 5.0 points and 1.6 rebounds per game.

Now, Mikesell will look to return to the 3-on-3 sphere with Team USA, one which another Buckeye is well familiar with.

This year, Mikesell's former teammate McMahan played for the FIBA 3-on-3 U23 Basketball World Cup team, representing the United States from Sept. 11-15 in Mongolia. McMahan helped her teammates win gold in the event.

Mikesell earns the opportunity to represent Team USA again about 1 1/2 years after her last game for Ohio State. While with the Buckeyes, the transfer from Oregon and Maryland averaged 17.9 points, 3.1 rebounds and 2.1 assists per game while shooting an efficient 45.4 percent from the floor and 44.2 percent from three.

Her efforts in scarlet and gray earned her a first-team All-Big Ten selection in 2022 and helped lead Ohio State to its first Elite Eight appearance since 1993.

Those successes caused the Indiana Fever to select the former Buckeye with the 13th pick in the second round of the 2023 draft, but she failed to make the roster and has since appeared in just six WNBA games, all for the Atlanta Dream.

As BSB went to press, Mikesell wasn't signed by a WNBA team.

McMahon, Petty Named To Preseason Watch List

Considering her track record with the Buckeyes through two seasons, which undoubtedly helped her make the 3-on-3 team, it's no surprise that McMahon made the Preseason Wooden Award watch list on Nov. 7. Joining McMahon on the list that contained 50 total players was first-year Buckeye Ajae Petty.

Ohio State 104, Cleveland State 69

Nov. 5, 2024
Value City Arena • Columbus

	1	2	3	4	F
Ohio State (1-0)	24	18	33	29	104
Cleveland State (0-1)	9	15	27	18	69

Ohio State	Total	FT	Reb.				
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
J. Cambridge	26	12-14	5-5	0-6	6	2	31
McMahon	28	6-11	1-1	0-4	0	2	17
Thierry	27	5-9	1-4	0-1	1	4	11
Gray	24	3-8	0-0	0-0	5	0	8
Petty	20	3-8	2-4	3-3	0	1	8
Lemmila	20	3-5	3-4	1-5	1	1	9
K. Cambridge	16	1-2	4-6	0-3	2	3	6
Greene	14	2-5	0-0	2-2	1	3	6
Walker	13	3-4	0-0	2-3	3	0	6
Watson	12	1-6	0-0	0-1	0	1	2
Totals	200	39-72	16-24	39	19	17	104

Percentages: FG: 54.2%. FT: 66.7%. Three-point field goals: 10-21. (Gray 2-6, McMahon 4-5, Watson 0-4, Cambridge 2-3, Greene 2-2, Thierry 0-1). **Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 10** (Lemmila 4, Cambridge 2, McMahon, Thierry, Petty, Walker). **Turnovers: 10** (Gray 3, J. Cambridge 2, K. Cambridge 2, McMahon, Thierry, Greene). **Steals: 16** (J. Cambridge 5, Gray 3, Thierry 2, Lemmila 2, McMahon, K. Cambridge, Greene, Walker).

CSU	Total	FT	Reb.				
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Perdue	35	9-20	7-8	0-0	0	1	29
Guerreiro	29	5-11	2-2	1-6	0	1	14
Maples	36	4-11	2-3	1-2	3	4	11
Leo	25	3-6	0-0	0-1	2	1	8
Reisma	14	1-2	0-0	1-3	0	4	2
Howard	16	1-6	0-3	4-2	0	0	2
Goula	3	0-0	2-2	0-1	0	0	2
Moore	8	0-3	1-2	3-1	0	2	1
Hernandez	18	0-1	0-0	0-5	0	4	0
Hurley	7	0-0	0-0	0-1	1	0	0
Fegan	6	0-2	0-0	0-0	0	1	0
Ellis	3	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0
Totals	200	23-62	14-20	12-24	6	18	69

Percentages: FG: 37.1%. FT: 70%. Three-point field goals: 9-25 (Perdue 4-11, Leo 2-5, Guerreiro 2-4, Maples 1-4, Fegan 0-1). **Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 7** (Hernandez 5, Reisma, Moore). **Turnovers: 24** (Leo 5, Perdue 4, Maples 4, Guerreiro 3, Ellis 3, Reisma, Howard, Goula, Hernandez, Fegan). **Steals: 2** (Perdue, Guerreiro). **Officials:** Reynolds, Resch, Enlund. **Attendance:** 4,828.

Petty, who has transferred twice since the start of her collegiate career, last played for Kentucky before coming to Ohio State. As a Wildcat, Petty was a role player as a junior, averaging 5.7 points and 4.7 rebounds per game, but blossomed into one of the best players in the SEC last season.

In 32 games (all starts), she led the team in scoring (14.2) and rebounding (10.6) while shooting 50.7 percent from the field.

In her first game with the Buckeyes against Cleveland State, Petty had eight points on 3-of-8 shooting and tied for a team high with six rebounds while adding a block in 20 minutes of action.

McMahon has put quite the career together with the Buckeyes. In her first two collegiate seasons, she has averaged 14.8 points, 5.9 rebounds, 2.3 assists and 1.4 steals per game, an impressive stat line that has helped her earn consecutive All-Big Ten honors, including a first-team all-conference nod in 2023-24.

The Wooden Award, given to the nation's best collegiate basketball player, will be announced on April 11. Other notable names on the watch list include UCLA's Lauren Betts and Kiki Rice, UConn's Paige Bueckers and Azzi Fudd, USC's Kiki Iriafen and Juju Watkins, Iowa's Hannah Stuelke and TCU's Hailey Van Lith.

Cambridge Given "Dub Crown"

In her first collegiate game, Cambridge

Cambridge Dazzles in OSU Debut

By **BOBBY GORBETT**
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

It didn't take long for No. 14 Ohio State (1-0) to find its next potential superstar point guard.

In Ohio State's 104-69 season-opening win over Cleveland State (0-1) on Nov. 5 at Value City Arena, true freshman point guard Jalon Cambridge had just about the best college debut imaginable.

In 26 minutes played as the Buckeyes' starting point guard, Cambridge connected on 12 of 14 field goals to score a game-high 31 points before a crowd of 4,828.

Cambridge wasted no time in introducing herself to the Buckeye faithful. The Nashville, Tenn., native helped Ohio State get off to a 24-7 lead with 2:13 left in the first quarter by hitting each of her first four field goals and totaling an impressive four steals, an assist and a block in the first quarter.

"I didn't really have any nerves," Cambridge said of her collegiate debut. "I was just excited to be here, blessed to be in a big environment, be here with amazing people."

Cambridge led the charge with a disruptive full-court press on the defensive end that forced eight turnovers in the game's first five minutes, but it wasn't just the freshman who got off to a strong start.

Cotie McMahon added six points of her own in the first 10 minutes on 2-of-4 shooting, while Taylor Thierry scored five on 2-of-3 shooting to help guide Ohio State to a commanding 24-9 lead after one.

Still flawless from the field, Cambridge showed off her capabilities as a three-point shooter early in the second period, making back-to-back three-point field goals at 9:17 and 9:01 to give the Buckeyes their biggest lead of the game to that point at 30-11.

The Buckeyes cooled off some midway through the second quarter as Cambridge missed her first shot of the game after hitting her first six, allowing Cleveland State to stay within reach, trailing 32-17 with 5:48 left in the half. But a Thierry layup and a McMahon triple got the team back in the right direction to put them up, 37-17, with 4:05 left.

Madison Greene picked up her first points of the game on a triple with 47 seconds left to give Ohio State a 42-22 lead, but Sara Guerreiro hit two free throws soon after to put the score at 42-24 at the half.

Although the game was all but decided at halftime, the Buckeyes weren't the most

efficient from the field, connecting on only 16 of 38 field goals (42.1 percent) in the first half against the Vikings' zone defense.

McMahon and another new face, graduate forward and Kentucky transfer Ajae Petty, got the Buckeyes back on a more efficient track early in the second half.

Petty made a layup on the Buckeyes' opening possession before McMahon followed her lead with a midrange jumper one play later. McMahon, only a 23.0 percent shooter from three-point range in 2023-24, looked like a sharpshooter against the Vikings, draining another three-point shot with 8:13 left in the third quarter to put the Buckeyes up 49-29.

Ohio State shot a much more efficient 11 of 17 from the field (64.7 percent) in the third quarter - seven of those field goals coming from Cambridge and McMahon - helping the Buckeyes' lead swell to as many as 27 points, 75-48, after a Kennedy Cambridge layup with 25 seconds left in the period.

With the lead squarely in hand for Ohio State, both teams had the opportunity to empty their benches in the fourth quarter, a period in which the Buckeyes outscored the Vikings 29-18 behind four points each from reserves Elsa Lemmila and Eboni Walker to cruise to the 35-point win. Chance Gray led the way in the final 10 minutes with eight on 3-of-3 shooting.

In addition to her 31 points, Jalon Cambridge led the team with six assists and five steals and tied for the Buckeye lead in rebounds with six, along with Petty and Lemmila.

"It's reflective of her ability, but probably more importantly, she plays so hard and competes on every possession," Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff said of Cambridge's impressive debut. "She doesn't take a play off, and that's rare for a freshman to be able to do that. She's obviously a special kid and a special player."

Despite the 35-point loss, the Vikings had some positives to take away from the game. Senior guard Mickayla Perdue led the team with 29 points, making 9 of 20 field goals. As a team, Cleveland State went 23 of 62 (37.1 percent) from the field for the game, compared to the 39 of 72 (54.2 percent) from the Buckeyes on the night.

Ohio State will play two more games before BSB goes to press again, including a home game against Charlotte on Nov. 12 (6 p.m., BTN-Plus) and its road opener against Belmont on Nov. 17 (3 p.m., ESPN+).

was the first-ever honoree of Ohio State's "Dub Crown." The Dub Crown, which seems to be a variant of a game ball, is likely the Buckeyes' 2024-25 replacement of their "Dub Chain," which the team used the last few seasons.

Cambridge, who had a spectacular collegiate debut, finishing the game with a team-high 31 points on 12-of-14 shooting along with six rebounds, six assists, five steals and two blocks, was an easy choice for the crown.

To the excitement of her teammates,

Cambridge put the crown on her head following her performance, and her coach encouraged her in a video posted to the team's Instagram page after the game.

"Obviously you had a great overall performance, but you made people better," McGuff said to Cambridge. "You made us play with great pace, which is what I told you yesterday you needed to do, so awesome job. You made a lot of great decisions, you had a lot of poise for someone who played in their first game in college, so great job."

OSU Wrestling Bringing Back Full Lineup

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

At the college level, a dynasty is a hard thing to maintain with players in most cases getting to stick around for only four years. But Penn State and its head coach, Cael Sanderson, have been able to build one of the strongest dynasties in college athletics history, winning 11 of the last 13 NCAA wrestling titles as a team and setting the record for most team points scored in the tournament in 2023 with 172.5.

One of those two titles that the Nittany Lions weren't able to win was in 2015 when Tom Ryan led Ohio State to the top for the first time in program history. The Buckeyes have come close many times since that win, coming in second place five times on Ryan's watch (2008, 2009, 2017, 2018, 2019), but haven't been able to get back on top.

But when the 2023-24 season concluded and the Buckeyes were in eighth place, there was only confidence exuded from the coaches about what the future could hold for the program since they had built an elite young roster.

"We're in a good spot," Ryan said in March. "We have a lot of points returning. What people don't see, these are elite wrestlers, but these are really great men. They're great examples. They set a really high standard. We're super excited for what's coming. There are some really good guys who redshirted this year and some good guys coming in."

Ohio State is bringing back almost every wrestler from last season who competed in their respective weight classes in the NCAA tournament, along with redshirt senior Bryce Hepner, who didn't make it into the event last season at 165 pounds – the only weight class the Buckeyes didn't have a participant – and redshirt junior Paddy Gallagher, who is still dealing with an injury he suffered last year that ended his campaign early.

The confidence in the returning lineup is also reflected in the national rankings. As BSB went to press, Ohio State had a grappler ranked in the top 20 in nine of the 10 weight classes in the InterMat rankings, excluding only 165 pounds, where Hepner is 27th in the country.

While the main issue for the Buckeyes last season was that they were undergoing some major lineup changes, the biggest problem they face in 2024 is having a lot of tough decisions to make at multiple weight classes because they have more than one wrestler in many of them who could compete at the national level, which is a great problem to have.

Ryan is now in his 19th season as head coach and is a full decade removed from his national championship-winning season, but he has continued to have the Buckeyes be not only relevant but elite.

They come into the season as the No. 6-ranked team in the country according to InterMat, and Ryan understands what the expectations are this year.

"They're always high," he said of the expectations. "The standard here is incredibly high. We've been one of the elite programs in the country for a long time, and that will always be the case. It's about us helping each man live up to their full potential. We're super



FILE PHOTO

GOING TO THE MAT – Tom Ryan is in his 19th season coaching the Buckeyes with a national title in 2015 and five second-place finishes. He said competing for a championship is the standard every season.

excited."

The season got off to an extremely strong start with seven wrestlers winning a title at the Clarion Open on Nov. 3 compared to four of them taking first place last season.

With the season already in full swing, Buckeye Sports Bulletin is breaking down every weight class for Ohio State. InterMat rankings and match results are all as of Nov. 8.

125 pounds: One of the weight classes that has a dilemma in terms of who will end up starting down the line this season is 125 pounds. Last year, it was Brendan McCrone who won the spot over true freshman Vincent Kilkeary. Now the two are in a battle again for the spot.

Kilkeary came into Ohio State as a much higher-rated recruit, but McCrone has been able to stave off the young Kilkeary, who now has a redshirt year under his belt. The battle came to a head at the Clarion Open when the two met in the finals for a match that came down to the wire with McCrone ultimately winning it by a 5-3 decision.

McCrone has improved over the offseason, now ranked No. 14 in the country, and a lot of that has been him working hard on getting better in basic positions. He had multiple big wins in 2023 when he was able to score points in situations where he was forced to scramble.

"I thrived a lot in positions where I was unorthodox last year," McCrone said. "Top and bottom, I was good at creating positions I could thrive in, positions that most people weren't familiar with. But I was struggling in positions that were very basic.

"My main focus this offseason with (associate head coach J) Jagers and (assistant Logan) Stieber, was just getting my legs cleaner and staying stronger in my position, which has helped me elevate my game a lot."

McCrone was able to help his team to some big ranked dual wins last season, beating the No. 4 wrestler in the country early in

the season in the Buckeyes' win over Virginia Tech and beating the No. 1 grappler in the nation, NC State's Jakob Camacho, getting the pin in 37 seconds when the Buckeyes bested the second-ranked Wolfpack. He said those two wins gave him a lot of confidence and let him know he could compete at the highest level.

Now he is attempting to prove that he can be consistent when it comes to beating opponents who are at the top.

133 pounds: Nic Bouzakis earned the spot at 133 pounds last season and had a lot of very bright spots where he showed that he can wrestle at an All-America level. The problem for him throughout the year was staying consistent.

He would occasionally be upset by much lower-ranked wrestlers, but he also could compete with the best in the country, evidenced by the fact that he was able to pin fifth-ranked Kai Orine of NC State in 51 seconds and also come close to taking down No. 1 Daton Fix of Oklahoma State in the NCAA tournament last season.

Stieber believes that focus is the main issue for the now-redshirt sophomore Bouzakis when it comes to being able to stay strong for the entire seven minutes of a bout.

"The biggest key would be being able to focus the whole match," Stieber said. "If he can just keep his mind focused for the whole match, he's going to have a good chance. He's got to be able to use his energy the right way, just utilize his strengths when he can. He's really good in specific positions. When he gets in some positions, he's very elite and he's a great finisher. But sometimes, for lack of better words, he loses his mind out there and does things that just don't make sense."

That message has obviously gotten through to Bouzakis, who said he has been working on it over the offseason.

"It's just gas tank and being the most active person on the mat during a match, not getting tired," he said. "I mean, everyone gets

tired, but I need to be better about showing that I'm not tired and be constantly moving so I can compete with these guys. I just have to stay focused for longer periods of time. I have issues with that and that's something I'm trying to work on."

Bouzakis is ranked No. 15 in the country, but he does have some competition right behind him with the Buckeyes. True freshman Ben Davino could also be vying for the 133-pound spot this season.

If the Buckeyes wanted to, it would make sense to redshirt Davino this year since Bouzakis is capable of competing at a very high level when he's at his best, but if he's unable to be consistent like he has been working on and Ryan wants to put the best lineup onto the mat when March comes around, Davino could end up being that option.

During the Clarion Open, Davino showed that he's already ready to compete when he made it all the way to the finals to face off against Bouzakis, beating the returning starter 5-3.

Both Bouzakis and Davino would be very strong options, but there could be a decision to make down the road if Bouzakis doesn't continue to improve.

141 pounds: A weight class that has no battle for the starting spot is 141 pounds because national champion Jesse Mendez is returning for his junior season with the goal of claiming another individual title this season.

"I think repeating is harder than the first one," Mendez said. "A lot of guys win that first one and can become complacent. Winning a national title is a lot of people's final goal, but I set out at a young age to win multiple, and I'm going to."

Mendez's confidence is not unfounded. He consistently competed with the best of the best last year, beating Penn State's Beau Bartlett in both the Big Ten championship and the national title match to win both events, earning a late takedown in the third period at NCAAs.

Despite the title win, he is still ranked No. 2 in the country to begin the year behind Northern Colorado's Andrew Alirez, who won the title in 2023 but redshirted last season to try to make the U.S. Olympic team at 65 kg.

Now Mendez is looking to prove that despite Alirez's return to the college stage, he is still the best in the country, but he is also trying to help lead his team to glory as well. He began that by winning the Clarion Open title at his weight class in dominant fashion, a 14-3 major decision over Lehigh's Luke Stanich.

"The biggest thing is leading by example," he said. "It's really easy to work hard when I have guys working really hard next to me, so that's something I want to be, is a hard worker and somebody (the team) can look towards. And they think, 'They've done what I want to do, and I just have to emulate it.'"

He said that over the offseason, a period in which he wrestled in the Olympic trials and finished in fourth place, he has been working on his hand fighting and trying to stay ahead when he gets his opponent to the ground, along with bringing more pressure on the attack without getting himself out of position.

"I've just been adding new wrinkles to my game, trying to be more creative and find

more opportunities to get the leg and widen that gap between myself and those top guys.”

Mendez’s confidence is never an issue – rightfully so at this point – and he believes that this title is his to win, as is next year’s as well.

“I’m going to win that second one, and I’m going to win that third one,” he said. “But I want to do it in a more dominant fashion this year.”

149 pounds: Dylan D’Emilio went into the 2023-24 season as a top-10 wrestler in the country but had somewhat of a disappointing season at times. He finished the year with a 27-13 record, going 11-6 in dual matches and 4-4 in Big Ten duals.

D’Emilio, now in his sixth and final season with the Buckeyes, is trying to enjoy the time he has left and make sure he continues the culture of the program as a leader on the team.

“I’m extremely grateful to be here. I grew up a huge Buckeye fan,” he said. “This is a dream of mine to be here, and I’ve been able to do it for six years of my life, which is incredible. I don’t think I need to leave a mark, like ‘This is Dylan D’Emilio’s mark on Ohio State wrestling.’ I just think it’s upholding that standard and the culture so we’re doing the right things as a team.”

He said his main goal for the season is simply to wrestle to the best of his ability and see where it takes him. He has worked hard over the offseason to make improvements to his game.

“There’s always small things to do, those minute details that really separate you as an individual in wrestling,” he said. “Front-end stuff, like getting into the legs and then certain aspects with finishing and defense, those kinds of things where we just really get into the weeds with it. And those small details help you jump levels.”

D’Emilio started off strong with a title win at the Clarion Open, defeating Kade Brown of Pittsburgh by decision, 5-1. He is ranked 11th in the nation to start the season.

Redshirt freshman Brandon Cannon could also be an option for the Buckeyes at 149 pounds but was held out of the Clarion Open with a finger injury and is working on getting back as soon as possible. He is hoping to translate what he worked on in the offseason into matches this year.

“For me, it’s just being less sporadic with my wrestling,” he said. “Just be more methodical and stay aggressive, but not be as wild and all over the place where I get out of position.”

157 pounds: There were multiple season-ending injuries suffered in the Buckeyes’ lineup last year, and Paddy Gallagher had one of them. He had to leave the mat, and Isaac Wilcox dropped from 165 pounds to take his place for the remainder of the year.

The redshirt junior is looking forward to being able to get back on the mat again. That time has not yet come, but it was expected to be by the time the Buckeyes hosted their first dual meet against Chattanooga on Nov. 14 at the Covelli Center, according to Jagers.

“(A national championship) is definitely the expectation, but I’m just excited to compete,” Gallagher said. “I’m trying to compete as soon as possible. I’ve been itching really bad for about a year to compete, but I can’t really play the tough-guy route with this type of injury, even though that’s what I’ve done my whole life.”

He is trying to be smart about how he re-

turns from his injury early this year because both he and the rest of his team want the No. 10 wrestler in the country to be available late in the season when they are battling for both a Big Ten championship and a national championship, but it has been tough for Gallagher to take it slow.

While he was out and couldn’t get onto the mat himself, he was still doing everything he could to improve his craft.

“I studied everyone in the room, just watched them wrestle,” Gallagher said, “everyone in here. I watched Jesse wrestle a lot and just figured out where I could implement things that they do into my wrestling. I couldn’t do the things with physical reps, so I figured I’d get better on the mental side.”

165 pounds: The only weight class where the Buckeyes didn’t have a wrestler competing in the NCAA tournament nor someone in the top 20 to open the 2024 season is 165 pounds, where redshirt senior Hepner seems set to be the starter for Ohio State again.

Before Wilcox made the move to 157 pounds last year, there was a battle between him and Hepner for the 165-pound spot, which Wilcox was ahead in until he volunteered to move down a weight class.

But Hepner has been working hard over the offseason to get better at scoring points, something that he has had trouble with at times. He understands that he needs to improve in some areas, but also doesn’t want to get himself into bad situations.

“I’m just trying not to force things and letting them come naturally,” Hepner said. “I’m putting a lot of emphasis on the hand fight, and in doing so opportunities open up where I can take a high-probability shot rather than just shooting willy-nilly for the sake of doing so.”

“An area I could definitely do some work is in front-headlock defense and stuff that’s leading me into the front headlock, so focusing on patience in the hand fight and still staying ahead.”

Sammy Sasso, who was forced to sit the 2023-24 season after he was shot in a carjacking, has officially made his return to the roster this season. Jagers said he was fully recovered and had been competing on the mat, but he suffered an ankle injury in the preseason and is recovering from that.

Sasso, who has been with the program since the 2018-19 season, was set to wrestle at 157 pounds last season after coming up just short of an individual title in 2023 but is now listed at 165 pounds and could be an option along with Hepner in that weight class.

174 pounds: Another wrestler who suffered a season-ending injury last year was Carson Kharchla. He is in a similar situation as Gallagher to begin the season and is taking it slowly to make sure that when he gets back he is at 100 percent, especially since he has dealt with multiple big injuries in college, admitting the last time he felt 100 percent was probably before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like Gallagher, the graduate Kharchla – who is the 10th-best wrestler in his weight class – has been trying to improve mentally.

“I would say I had a more delayed comeback than Paddy did. But realistically I just focused on my wrestling and what I can do better, relearn wrestling again, relearn the basics and focusing on maximizing my technique and not wasting any movements, any energy. But everything is going well. I couldn’t ask for anything better.”

Kharchla is still limiting the activities he does in practice at this point, saying that he is trying to be smarter about how he approaches his preparation since he has learned that his body isn’t handling his usual approach well.

“I gave everything I had in practice and did everything 100 percent, and I have no regrets about that,” Kharchla said. “But maybe if I could have done things a little smarter and not been so driven by the tough guy mentality of, ‘Do it, do it hard.’”

His spot was taken last season by then-true freshman Rocco Welsh, whom Ohio State initially planned to redshirt last season. But when Kharchla went down, Welsh immediately rose to the occasion and was one of the best grapplers in the country.

He totaled a 26-6 overall record (8-3 dual, 5-3 in Big Ten) and was even able to compete with the No. 1 pound-for-pound wrestler in the country. He dropped the NCAA title match to Penn State’s Carter Starocci but lost by only a 2-0 decision, having a chance to win it up until the final seconds of the match.

Welsh could take Kharchla’s spot to begin the season again since Kharchla might not be ready to go until January, but the sophomore wrestled the Clarion Open at 184 pounds and won a title in the weight class and could compete with sophomore Ryder Rogotzke for the starting spot there. Wherever he ends up, Welsh is trying to get better at scoring more points, since he is already solid on defense.

“Even though I lost to Starocci, I really wasn’t close to winning that match,” he said. “Some people were saying, ‘Dang, it was a close match,’ but in my head, I really wasn’t close to winning those matches. That’s not how I like to wrestle either. This year, it’s going to be a lot more shooting, a lot more movement and a lot more scores. That will help separate the matches that I already won close, then also the matches I lost. I’m going to be scoring more points and I’m going to be winning them.”

184 pounds: Rogotzke is a wrestler who has the ability to pin anyone he goes against because he is very aggressive at going for points and getting opponents to the ground. It’s the type of wrestler he has always been, and Ryan embraced that, allowing him to continue while also trying to improve the other things he hasn’t been as good at.

“Since the world team, (I’ve been working on) a lot of leg defense,” Rogotzke said. “Really just being more in control and being more basic. I’ve got my rolling around and my high-flyer moves, but I’ve got to get more into the basics. If someone shoots at the leg, maybe don’t try to do a flip over them. Maybe just stuff their head and go around.”

Although he is trying not to put himself in situations that might not be a smart move, Rogotzke – who is ranked No. 17 to open the year – still isn’t going away from the mentality that has got him to this point in his career either.

“It’s a gunslinger mentality,” he said. “Just send everything you have. When you’re smaller, you want to reach back. Coaches tell you to stop. I just didn’t really stop. Then more reps. The more you drill something, the better you’re going to get at it. Then it’s just a sense of wrestling freely when I’m on the mat out there and some people freeze up a bit more. They don’t want to hit something.”

197 pounds: Luke Geog also dealt with an injury toward the end of last season, but

he didn’t have to come out, instead wrestling through the pain. But due to that, he feels like he could have finished better. Now the redshirt sophomore is ranked No. 11 in the country at 197 pounds and has high hopes for his season since he is back to full health.

“The goal is always to be a national champ,” he said. “But the biggest goal is just to wrestle and be proud of how I’m wrestling.”

There is some competition for Geog in the room with fellow redshirt sophomore Seth Shumate back up at 197 pounds as well. The two have competed for a starting spot. Shumate said that needing to shed the weight to be at 184 pounds last season didn’t have much effect on him.

“Wrestling is wrestling. If you want to get the weight off, the weight will come off,” he said. “Just take it day by day, control the controllables and try to put your best self out there.”

Geog, like everyone else on his team, had some specific things he tried to work on over the offseason, and he thinks that being at Ohio State has allowed him to improve even more, making him look forward to some of the competition he is going to see this season.

“A lot of hand fighting,” he said of what he worked on. “Just a lot of top, bottom too. I struggled a bit last year on bottom, so I focused on those areas and cleaned up the little stuff too.”

“You want to wrestle the best guys. I wrestle teammates all the time, and we push each other every day,” he said. “That’s why you come to a program like Ohio State. You come here to wrestle tough guys. You come here to have challenging opponents. You want someone to challenge you, or you’re not growing.”

Heavyweight: Nick Feldman had a very impressive redshirt freshman campaign at heavyweight, seeming to get better throughout the year. He won some very big matches that helped the Buckeyes take dual-meet wins, most notably a last-second takedown in a win over No. 4 Lucas Davison to beat Michigan 20-19 when the Wolverines came to the Covelli Center last January.

In the Big Ten championship, Feldman went against the No. 1 wrestler in the country, Penn State’s Greg Kerkvliet, and lost, but he was able to score a three-point takedown on the three-time All-American, the first he had suffered the entire season.

The two met up again in the NCAA quarterfinals, and Feldman lost the match 1-0. He understands that to beat the best in the country – Kerkvliet is back for another season as the No. 1 heavyweight wrestler – he needed to add to his game over the offseason.

“(There was) a lot of focus on building better foundations in my wrestling,” said Feldman, who is now tabbed as the third-best heavyweight in the nation. “I had a strong finish last year. Not what I wanted, but strong. It was really good for me. I wanted to build off that and just look where I was lacking with the best guys and strengthen my base, the foundation of my wrestling and the hand fight, on my feet, on top and on bottom. And I feel well-rounded, really dangerous.”

After finishing as an All-American last season, he has even higher goals this year, and he is not holding back or scared of any opponents who might be in his way.

“I want everybody. I want to kill them all,” Feldman said.

BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL (8-1, 5-1)

Aug. 31 AKRON, W 52-6.

Sept. 7 WESTERN MICHIGAN, W 56-0; 21 MARSHALL, W 49-14; 28 at Michigan State, W 38-7.

Oct. 5 IOWA, W 35-7; 12 at Oregon, L 32-31; 26 NEBRASKA, W 21-17.

Nov. 2 at Penn State, W 20-13; 9 PURDUE, W 45-0; 16 vs. Northwestern at Wrigley Field; 23 INDIANA; 30 MICHIGAN.

MEN'S BASKETBALL (1-0)

Oct. 18 at Cincinnati (Exh.), L 80-62.

Nov. 4 vs. Texas at Hall of Fame Series, Las Vegas, W 80-72; 11 YOUNGSTOWN STATE; 15 at Texas A&M; 19 EVANSVILLE; 22 CAMPBELL; 25 GREEN BAY; 29 PITTSBURGH.

Dec. 4 at Maryland; 7 RUTGERS; 14 vs. Auburn at Holiday Hoopsgiving, Atlanta; 17 VALPARAISO; 21 vs. Kentucky at CBS Sports Classic, New York; 29 INDIANA STATE.

Jan. 3 MICHIGAN STATE; 6 at Minnesota; 9 OREGON; 14 at Wisconsin; 17 INDIANA; 21 at Purdue; 27 IOWA; 30 at Penn State.

Feb. 2 at Illinois; 6 MARYLAND; 9 at Nebraska; 12 WASHINGTON; 16 MICHIGAN; 20 NORTHWESTERN; 23 at UCLA; 26 at USC.

March 4 NEBRASKA; 8 at Indiana; 12-16 Big Ten Tournament, Indianapolis

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (1-0)

Nov. 5 CLEVELAND STATE, W 104-69; 12 CHARLOTTE; 17 at Belmont; 20 at Ohio; 24 BOWLING GREEN; 28 vs. Old Dominion at Daytona Beach Classic, Daytona Beach, Fla.; 29 vs. Utah State at Daytona Beach Classic, Daytona Beach, Fla.

Dec. 8 ILLINOIS; 10 BALL STATE; 14 YOUNGSTOWN STATE; 17 GRAND VALLEY STATE; 20 vs. Stanford at Bay Area Women's Classic, San Francisco; 29 at Rutgers.

Jan. 5 NORTHWESTERN; 8 at Michigan; 12 OREGON; 16 at Wisconsin; 19 at Penn State; 23 MARYLAND; 26 at Nebraska.

Feb. 2 WASHINGTON; 5 at UCLA; 8 at USC; 13 MINNESOTA; 17 IOWA; 20 at Indiana; 23 PURDUE; 26 MICHIGAN STATE;

March 2 at Maryland; 6-10 Big Ten Tournament, Indianapolis.

CROSS COUNTRY

Aug. 30 Tommy Evans Invitational at Norton, Ohio, Men: 1st/8, Women: 2nd/10.

Sept. 20 Roy Griak Invitational at Minneapolis, Men: 5th/17, Women: 7th/17.

Oct. 4 Loyola Lakefront Invitational at Chicago, Men 9th/15, Women: 10th/16; 19 Wisconsin Pre-Nationals at Madison, Wis., Men: 3rd/25, Women: 5th/29.

Nov. 1 Big Ten Championships at Champaign, Ill., Men 10th/15; Women 8th/18; 15 NCAA Regional Championships at Norton, Ohio; 23 NCAA Championships at Madison, Wis.

FENCING

Sept. 28 OSU Open, NTS; 29 OSU Duals, Men 5-0; Women 5-0.

Nov. 2-3 West Invitational at La Jolla, Calif. Men 5-1; Women 7-1; 17 Elite Invitational at Philadelphia.

Jan. 18 St. John's Duals at Queens, N.Y.; 19 Philadelphia Invitational at Philadelphia.

Feb. 1-2 Northwestern Duals at Evanston, Ill.; 22-23 CCFC Championships at Detroit.

March 8 NCAA Midwest Regionals, TBA; 20-23 NCAA Championships at University Park, Pa.

FIELD HOCKEY (14-5, 4-4)

Aug. 30 UALBANY, W 6-1.

Sept. 1 BUCKNELL, W 4-1; 6 at Colgate, W 5-0; 8 at Syracuse, W 5-0; 13 at Richmond, W 2-0; 15 at Old Dominion, W 2-1; 20 MICHIGAN STATE, W 4-0; 22 BROWN, W 5-2; 29 LOUISVILLE, W 4-3 (OT).

Oct. 6 at Michigan, L 1-0; 11 PENN STATE, W 4-0; 13 KENT STATE, W 3-0; 18 at Maryland, W 2-1; 20 at Rutgers, L 1-0; 25 INDIANA, W 2-1 (2OT); 27 IOWA, L 3-0

Nov. 1 at Northwestern, L 2-1; 3 CENTRAL MICHIGAN, W 7-1; 7 Big Ten Tournament at College Park, Md., vs Rutgers, L 2-1.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (7-2-1, 2-2-0)

Oct. 6 Niagara (exh.) W, 3-2 (OT); 11-12 AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL, T 3-3; W 5-2; 18-19 at Wisconsin, W 2-1 (OT); W 2-1; 25-26 BOWLING GREEN, W 3-1; W 2-0.

Nov. 1-2 LAKE SUPERIOR STATE, W 9-3; W 6-2; 8-9 at Michigan State, L 4-2; L 4-1; 15-16 at Lindenwood; 29-30 at Princeton.

Dec. 5-6 PENN STATE; 13-14 NOTRE DAME.

Jan. 3 vs. Michigan at Wrigley Field in Chicago; 5 at Michigan; 10-11 MINNESOTA; 24-25 at Penn State; 30-31 MICHIGAN STATE.

Feb. 7-8 at Notre Dame; 14-15 WISCONSIN; 21-22 at Minnesota; 27-28 MICHIGAN.

WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY

(11-2-2, 6-2-2)

Sept. 21-22 MINNESOTA DULUTH, L 2-1; L 4-3; 27-28 at Bemidji State, W 8-2; W 3-0.

Oct. 4-5 at St. Lawrence, W 3-2 (OT), W 5-3; 11-12 MINNESOTA, W 4-3; T 1-1 (SOW); 18-19 at St. Cloud State, W 5-1; T 3-3 (SOL); 22 MERCYHURST, W 5-1; 25 ICEBREAKER TOURNAMENT vs. STONEHILL, W 11-0; 26 ICEBREAKER TOURNAMENT vs. CORNELL, W 7-3.

Nov. 1-2 at St. Thomas, W 5-1; W 1-0 (OT); 15-16 WISCONSIN; 22-23 at Minnesota State.

Dec. 2 at Mercyhurst.

Jan. 2 at Wisconsin; 4 at Wrigley Field in Chicago vs. Wisconsin; 10-11 BEMIDJI STATE; 17-18 at Minnesota Duluth; 24-25 MINNESOTA STATE; 31 at Minnesota.

Feb. 1 at Minnesota; 7-8 ST.

THOMAS; 21-22 ST. CLOUD STATE; 28 WCHA Quarterfinals.

March 1-2 WCHA Quarterfinals.

MEN'S SOCCER (13-1-3, 7-1-2)

Aug. 22 CLEVELAND STATE, T 1-1; 25 at Akron, W 2-0; 29 SIUE, W 4-0.

Sept. 1 UNLV, W 3-2; 8 XAVIER, W, 3-1; 13 BUTLER, W 1-0; 17 at Penn State, W 5-0; 22 RUTGERS, W 3-0; 27 INDIANA, T 2-2.

Oct. 4 at Michigan, W 6-3; 7 WASHINGTON, W, 2-0; 11 at UCLA, L, 2-1; 19 at Wisconsin, W 3-2; 25 NORTHWESTERN, W 2-0; 29 MICHIGAN STATE, T 2-2.

Nov. 3 at Maryland, W 2-1; 10 Big Ten Tournament semifinals, W 3-1; 17 Big Ten Tournament finals.

WOMEN'S SOCCER (12-5-3, 6-3-2)

Aug. 15 DUKE, W 1-0; 22 MILWAUKEE, W 4-0; 25 ASHLAND, W 3-1; 29 SOUTH CAROLINA, T 1-1.

Sept. 5 at Navy, W 4-0; 8 at Auburn, L 1-0; 12 at Indiana, W 3-0; 15 BROWN, W 2-0; 19 IOWA, T 1-1; 22 NORTHWESTERN, W 2-1; 26 MICHIGAN STATE, T 2-2; 29 at Michigan, W 2-1.

Oct. 4 MARYLAND, W 3-0; 10 MINNESOTA, L 3-2; 13 at Purdue, W 4-2; 17 at USC, L 1-0; 20 at UCLA, L 1-0; 27 PENN STATE, W, 4-1; 31 vs. Wisconsin at Big Ten Tournament in Minneapolis, W 1-0.

Nov. 1 vs. Wisconsin at Big Ten Tournament in Minneapolis, W 1-0; 4 vs. USC at Big Ten Tournament in Minneapolis, L 1-0.

MEN'S SWIM & DIVE (4-0)

Oct. 19 KENTUCKY W 191-107; 25 DENISON, W 182-116; 26 ALUMNI MEET, NTS.

Nov. 1-2 at Virginia Tech, W 177-176; 8 PENN STATE, W 173-127; 21-23 OHIO STATE FALL INVITATIONAL.

Jan. 18 at Michigan; 24 Tim Welsh Classic at South Bend, Ind.

Feb. 1 at Pittsburgh; 14-16 OHIO STATE WINTER INVITATIONAL; 26-March 1 Big Ten Championships at Minneapolis.

March 9 LAST CHANCE MEET; 10-12 NCAA ZONE DIVING; 13-15 CSCAA National Invitational at Ocala, Fla.; 26-29 NCAA Championships at Federal Way, Wash.

WOMEN'S SWIM & DIVE (5-0)

Oct. 19 KENTUCKY, W 218-80; AKRON, W 224-74; 25 DENISON, W 180-115; 26 ALUMNI MEET, NTS.

Nov. 1-2 at Virginia Tech, W 196-157; 8 PENN STATE, W 243-57; 21-23 OHIO STATE FALL INVITATIONAL.

Jan. 18 at Michigan; 24-25 Tim Welsh Classic at South Bend, Ind.

Feb. 1 at Pittsburgh; 14-16 OHIO STATE WINTER INVITATIONAL; 19-22 BIG TEN CHAMPIONSHIPS.

March 2 LAST CHANCE MEET; 10-12 NCAA ZONE DIVING; 13-15 CSCAA National Invitational at Ocala, Fla.; 19-22 NCAA Championships at Federal Way, Wash.

MEN'S TENNIS

Sept. 9-15 Las Vegas Challenger, NTS; 16-22 COLUMBUS CHALLENGER, NTS; 21-29 ITA All-American Championship at Tulsa, Okla., NTS.

Oct. 7-13 Louisville 25K Futures at Louisville, Ky., NTS; 10-15 ITA Midwest Regional Championship at East Lansing, Mich., NTS.

Nov. 7-10 ITA Sectional Championship at Fort Worth, Texas, NTS; 7-10 ITA Conference Masters Championship at San Diego, NTS; 19-24 NCAA Singles & Doubles Championship at Waco, Texas.

WOMEN'S TENNIS

Sept. 13-15 Debbie Southern Furman Fall Classic at Greenville, S.C., NTS; 21-29 ITA All-American Championships at Cary, N.C., NTS.

Oct. 4-6 Notre Dame Invitational at South Bend, Ind., NTS; 10-14 ITA Midwest Regionals at Columbus, Ohio, NTS; 25-27 UT Home Invitational at Knoxville, Tenn, NTS.

Nov. 1-3 Spartan Invite at East Lansing, Mich., NTS; 7-10 ITA Central Section Championships at Ann Arbor, Mich., NTS; 7-10 ITA Conference Masters Championships at San Diego, NTS; 19-24 NCAA Singles and Doubles Championships at Waco, Texas.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL (11-13, 4-10)

Aug. 30 at Dayton Flyer Invitational vs. Florida International, W 3-0; 31 at Dayton Flyer Invitational vs. Northern Iowa, W 3-1.

Sept. 6 at Florida Tournament vs. Southern Indiana, W 3-1; 7 at Florida Tournament vs. South Florida, L 3-2; 8 at Florida Tournament vs. Florida, L 3-1; 13 MIAMI (FL), W 3-0; 14 BUFFALO, W 3-2; 15 WRIGHT STATE, L 3-1; 20 at Bowling Green, W 3-1; 22 BOWLING GREEN, W 3-0; 27 at USC, L 3-2; 29 at UCLA, L 3-1.

Oct. 3 OREGON, L 3-0; 6 at Indiana, L 3-1; 10 at Northwestern, W 3-0; 13 MICHIGAN, L 3-1; 18 PENN STATE, L 3-2; 19 NEBRASKA, L 3-0; 23 at Purdue, L 3-0; 27 MINNESOTA, L, 3-2; 31 IOWA, W 3-0.

Nov. 3 at Michigan State, W 3-1; 8 at Michigan, W 3-2; 9 at Illinois, L 3-0; 15 MARYLAND; 16 RUTGERS; 22 WASHINGTON; 24 INDIANA; 27 at Wisconsin; 29 at Minnesota.

WRESTLING

Nov. 3 Clarion Open at Clarion, Pa., NTS; 14 UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT CHATTANOOGA; 17 at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania; 24 HOFSTRA.

Dec. 6-7 Cliff Keen Invitational at Las Vegas; 13 at Pittsburgh; 21 Collegiate Duals at Nashville.

Jan. 5 OREGON STATE; 10 at Illinois; 12 RUTGERS; 19 PURDUE; 25 at Iowa.

Feb. 1 at Michigan; 7 MINNESOTA; 9 at Indiana; 14 PENN STATE.

March 8-9 Big Ten Championships at Chicago; 20-22 NCAA Championships at Philadelphia.

World Traveler Hong Finds Home With Buckeyes

Ohio State freshman forward James Hong achieved two milestones this fall, one that took considerably longer than the other.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

Hong scored his first goal in the first period of his first game for the Buckeyes during a 3-3 tie against American International on Oct. 11. His goal came with four seconds left in the opening period to give the Buckeyes a 1-0 lead.

"It definitely felt good, a weight off my shoulders," he said. "Now, I don't really have to think about that. I was kind of fortunate – a lucky bounce there. Hopefully, I can keep putting the puck in the net."

His quest to become a U.S. citizen didn't have the same immediate results. In fact, it was a process that began about seven years ago when as a 13-year-old (he turns 20 on Nov. 22) his family moved to Irvine, Calif., from Canada in the latest stop after Hong – whose given first name is Jungwook – was born in Seoul, South Korea.

His family moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, when he was 3. At age 10 he and his mother relocated to Toronto for several years to pursue his passion for hockey at a higher level of competition.

Once the family settled in Irvine, the naturalization process started for Hong because a person cannot apply for citizenship until establishing residency in this country for five years.

In October, his patience paid off when he and his older siblings officially became naturalized citizens at a ceremony in California. Chris is a UCLA law graduate, and Diane attended University of Arizona medical school.

"I'm happy that we finally got it," James said. "It's kind of a relief that it's over. It was a long, hard process. Me, my brother and my sister just waited a super long time. It's rewarding to finally get that and have that stress behind us now."

Hong (5-10, 177) scored his second goal of the season on Nov. 1 against Lake Superior State.

Playing in seven of the first 10 games for the No. 13 Buckeyes, he had four points (two goals, four assists).

The Buckeyes have depth at forward, and he is one of several players competing for ice time. In the game against Lake Superior, a 9-3 victory, the Buckeyes had goals from eight players, and 16 in total had a point. For the weekend sweep, including a 6-2 win, there were 12 goal scorers.

"That's our team," coach Steve Rohlik said. "We're going to win because of our depth. Different guys are scoring goals. That's kind of who we are."

Hong has played well even though he is still acclimating to the college game.

"It's been a lot of fun," he said. "It's definitely been an adjustment from juniors.

All I can say is it's been awesome. The guys have been awesome. And then school life, representing the school is pretty cool."

Rohlik likes Hong's pursuit of the puck and willingness to commit to defense as much as offense.

"He can play in every aspect," the coach said. "He's played special teams in juniors. He's played wing. He's played center, so his versatility, skating ability and skill sets are invaluable."

Elite Prospects' 2023 NHL draft guide scouting report on Hong reflects that: "Hong never quits on a play. He sprints for every loose puck and engages in every battle he finds. Turnovers abound when he's on the forecheck. Opponents who try to step into him are often met with an intercepting shoulder. He bulldozes through contact without much difficulty, even overpowering bigger, faster players."

Fast Learner

It may seem that Hong was born to play hockey, but that's not the case.

"I started skating when I was 6 in Vancouver, just started skating at a local rink," he said. "I didn't know anything about hockey and started playing hockey at 7. I fell in love with it and stuck with it. It opened some doors for me, and that helped me continue with it."

He moved to hockey-crazed Toronto to play in the highly competitive youth leagues.

"My family wanted to give me the best opportunities growing up," he said. "That's why we all were moving around a lot, just trying to give me the best experience to grow as a player."

After Hong's stay in Toronto ended, the family moved to Irvine, where he played for the Anaheim Jr. Ducks AAA program for three years.

"When I was younger, I was not the most talented player," he said. "I think I really saw myself develop more when I was 14, so kind of later than most kids. I could see the effort put into it showing up."

From Anaheim he joined the Waterloo Black Hawks of the United States Hockey League beginning with the 2021-22 season. In two seasons he had 26 goals and 23 assists for 49 points in 118 games. He was an alternate captain for the USHL's Madison Capitols [[CQ]] in 2023-24, posting 53 points (17 goals, 36 assists) in 57 games.

Hong also represented South Korea in international competition, including four games last season, three of them Olympic qualifiers in Poland, and had three goals and three assists total with two of the goals and assists each coming in the Olympic qualifiers.

"I've wanted to do something like that, and once I got the opportunity to travel and have that experience, I'm very grateful," he said. "It helped me understand the different style of play in South Korea too. It's definitely different."

"It's growing over there for sure. They're doing a better job of trying to get more rinks and more programs. There's

still some challenges to overcome."

Hong's immediate family and several other relatives live in the United States, but most relations, including his grandparents, remain in South Korea.

"He brings a great culture into our group," Rohlik said. "We have players obviously from Canada and Sweden and in other years from Russia, the Czech Republic, but his story is a little unique."

Hong took a recruiting visit to Ohio State in August 2023 and immediately knew the next step.

"I just fell in love with the campus and liked the atmosphere of the school, just touring this place, touring the rink and meeting with the coaching staff," he said. "I felt this is a place I could succeed and grow in. It was a no-brainer and I actually committed right on the spot right when I got to the airport to go home. It wasn't very hard of a decision for me. I knew I wanted to come here."

Hong wouldn't change his nomadic lifestyle.

"I think every city that I've lived in taught me something different, something new every time, like the hockey culture in Toronto is completely different from the hockey culture in California," he said. "So, it was a good experience. I think that helped me grow as a person and as a play-

er. I hope that really helped me become the player I am today.

"Every place I've lived in so far has helped me shape my path to become who I am today."

Swept Away

The Buckeyes began the first of three consecutive road series by losing 4-2 and 4-1 at No. 4 Michigan State on Nov. 8-9.

Ohio State's seven-game winning streak was snapped in the opener at Munn Arena, the site of the 2024 conference semifinals where their season ended.

The Spartans (7-1-0, 2-0-0 Big Ten) led 2-0 after the first period of the opener and were up three in the middle period until Davis Burnside extended his goal streak to four games at 15:45 and Patrick Guzzo tallied at 11:44 of the third made it 3-2. An empty-net goal by the Spartans for the final margin marked the first time OSU allowed more than three goals this season.

In the rematch, Damien Carfagna put the Buckeyes (7-2-1, 2-2-0) ahead at 3:32 of the second period, but MSU scored the next four goals, including another empty-netter.

The Buckeyes play at Lindenwood on Nov. 15-16 and Princeton on Nov. 29-30.

For a recap of the Michigan State series, go to the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.



James Hong



WR Smith Catching Everyone's Attention

One of my favorite pastimes during the college football season is finding freshman players who I think will have huge careers. It's nice when I can hit on a guy a year or so before someone else and say "Yeah, I knew he was going to be good."

THE FACTS MAN Mike Wachsman

I saw my first Buckeye football game in 1972 when a freshman running back by the name of Griffin – you may have heard of him – began making a name for himself. Back then I didn't have the eye for players that I do now. I just knew he was fast. I didn't even know what a freshman or sophomore was, just that they were Buckeyes. Over the years as I became more discerning, it became easier to spot neophytes headed for the big time.

Cris Carter springs to mind. So does Chris Spielman. One rare year, I took in a high school game featuring Andy Katzenmoyer in his senior campaign. It took me all of five minutes to say, "Yeah, that guy's pretty good."

More recently, it was easy to spot bonafides in J.K. Dobbins and TreVeyon Henderson. The former ended his career second in OSU history in rushing, and the latter is still doing his thing and may be as good as he has been in his time in Columbus. He runs with urgency, runs routes, catches passes and blocks like a fullback.

Like everyone else, I was curious about the Jeremiah Smith hype. There have been plenty of touted receivers who have come to Ohio State and been average or worse. So I was not going to get too caught up in things. But I watched some senior year video and caught a few interviews the kid did and became more intrigued. Maybe this was the guy who finally had the goods to be a star immediately.

Raves started coming in during the off-season about his work ethic, and when he snagged an impossible catch one-handed on the first day of spring camp, the hype train went into overdrive. And I was one of the front-seat passengers.

Fast-forward to the season. To understand me, you have to know that I like lists. They can be lists of the top pizza places in town, music lists of artists or songs, top movies in a genre. Just about anything. I am fascinated by and actively create lists. So when it came time to run down the top freshmen for the 2024 college football season, Smith occupied the top rung. This was a particularly deep freshman receiving group, but none was better than Smith.

What he has done this season is nothing short of jaw-dropping. On an Ohio State team that passes less than any in recent memory, Smith leads the team in yards (765), yards per catch (17.0) and touchdowns (nine) and is second in receptions by two (45) to Emeka Egbuka. The catches, yardage and touchdown marks are school bests for a freshman and were

once the sole property of Carter.

"I don't really think about records," Smith said following his six-catch, 87-yard performance against the Boilermakers. "We have so much stuff going on, so many new plays to go over, so I didn't have it on my mind. I only found out about it after seeing it on the scoreboard. I had it in the list of goals for the season, and what's left is the Big Ten championship and the naty."

The scary part about Smith is that he is just now realizing his potential. He gained the reputation of a burner, and legitimately so because he can take the top off of a defense. But some of his best plays in recent weeks have come underneath because the defense plays so far off that it allows him to hug the sideline or sit just off the hash mark and make an easy play.

His touchdown against Purdue was a combination of both aspects, as the pass was a simple crosser, but he turned on the jets and outraced a defender to the end zone.

Smith plays like he's hungry, even though he is already a big-time star, and quite possibly the best wideout in America – even with only nine games under his belt.

"I just want to make a name for myself," Smith said. "I have a little brother who I want to be an example for. I don't want to be a bad role model for him. I just want to work hard for everything I do in life."

Based on early returns, it sounds like Smith is well on his way to realizing his goal.

"I'm not surprised in the slightest," quarterback Will Howard said. "As a freshman, I think he's, if not one of the best, the best receiver in the country. I knew Jeremiah was going to be special from the first time I met him, and he's continued to get better and better. He's a great kid, and I'm really happy for him getting that record today."

Smith still has a few things to learn, but it's pretty obvious that he operates on a different plane than most wideouts.

"He's getting stronger," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said. "He's getting more experience. He's understanding of coverages and different things. It's great to see him break a record."

He's understanding coverages? You mean he has done most of this in a watch-and-learn mindset? Ooh, boy. I feel bad for the rest of college football the next two seasons.

If There's A Will, There's A Way

It would be incorrect for me to say that Howard was my first choice for quarterback during portal season. I wanted Cam Ward, who has been lighting it up at Miami and is one of the leaders for the Heisman Trophy. But Howard was my No. 2, and when the Buckeyes secured his services, I did an imaginary cartwheel, mostly because I am too old to do a real one.

Howard certainly isn't your prototype passer. He'll never be mistaken for C.J. Stroud or Justin Fields with the way he

throws, the way his ball sails or even his placement. I'll even go so far as to say Kyle McCord has better arm talent than Howard does.

But whatever he may be lacking in passing consistency, he makes up for in spades in the leadership department. He talks to the media every week, he holds himself accountable, and most importantly, he leads. For all of McCord's talents, it often appeared as he was leaving the field that he was upset with a teammate or confused about why something didn't work. He didn't necessarily pass the buck, but he also did not come off as someone who galvanized the team. Howard has.

As far as numbers, they aren't bad – he's seventh nationally in ESPN's Total QBR metric, which measures all aspects of quarterback play, and he's 10th nationally in deep-ball throwing according to Pro Football Focus.

Howard put the weight of the team on his shoulders before the Penn State game, talking about how he grew up a Nittany Lions fan and envisioned himself throwing passes in Beaver Stadium – but not for the opposition. He said Penn State "thought I wasn't good enough. We'll see," and then left the lectern and eventually led the Buckeyes to a victory. How good is that?

After the Purdue game, Howard said, "It's not about them, it's about us. It doesn't matter who walks out there across from us, we have to be who we are. We can't just say we're the hardest-playing team in the country and that we're going to leave no doubt and then do it just sometimes. We have to do it all the time. We did that at Penn State. We came out there with energy and intensity. I didn't play my best game, but we scrapped it out and got it done. We said we needed to have that edge every single week. That has to be who we are and not just what we do from time to time. If we're going to be who we say we are, the baddest team in the country, we have to be that every single week."

Can he stay for another season?

Odd Allegiances

I find it humorous when OSU fans come up to me and ask which particular team I'm rooting for in Big Ten conference games as if I have other teams besides Ohio State that I pull for.

Outside of an occasional interest in Northwestern because my sister went there, there isn't another Big Ten team I truly root for. I love USC's and UCLA's uniforms so I enjoy watching them, but don't really care who wins. Indiana is a nice story, so I am cheering for the Hoosiers to keep it going. But it isn't any long-term thing.

So it's odd when people say, "Don't you want Michigan to be unbeaten or as good as possible when it plays the Buckeyes?" My quick and easy answer to that is no. I wouldn't care if the Wolverines were 0-11 coming into The Game because OSU would still focus on the task at hand and understand it's a rivalry game. It was nice

to see the Wolverines struggle yet again in a loss to the Hoosiers, bumping them down to 5-5. It's likely that U-M will knock off Northwestern to gain bowl-eligibility, but it's a long fall from 15-0 and a national title to 6-6 and scraping into the postseason.

It borders on dereliction of duty that the Wolverines did not dip into the portal for a quarterback. They have offensive weapons in backs Donovan Edwards and Kalel Mullings and tight end Colston Loveland, but they are so easy to defend because the specter of the downfield pass is almost nonexistent.

Ohio State was not afraid to explore the portal and came out with one of the best options in Howard.

Michigan picked up portal help in other spots, so you must wonder, why not at the most important position? Maybe if the Wolverines were even adequate under center, they could have picked up another win or two.

They're In The Home Stretch

November is when championship teams show what they have, and Ohio State has looked like a different team the first two weekends of the month. The toughness and lack of panic against Penn State and the dogged determination and destruction of Purdue could be a portent of big things ahead in the coming weeks – maybe even months.

The Buckeyes are the most efficient team in college football according to ESPN's efficiency metrics and are one of just three teams – Alabama and Ole Miss being the others – ranked in the top 10 in both offensive and defensive efficiency.

OSU also has an impressive résumé, sitting in fourth place in ESPN's résumé metric, behind Oregon, BYU and Georgia. The Buckeyes are second in game control, a byproduct of trailing for very little time this season, and are sixth in AVGWP, which measures a team's average in-game win probability rank adjusted for the chance that an average FBS team would control games from start to end the way this team did, given the schedule.

That preamble is a long-winded way of saying that many factors go into my weekly rankings. If I had to break it down, I would say it is 75 percent accomplishment and 25 percent team strength.

Sweet Sixteen

1. Oregon (10-0)
2. Ohio State (8-1)
3. Texas (8-1)
4. BYU (9-0)
5. Indiana (10-0)
6. Georgia (7-2)
7. Penn State (8-1)
8. Alabama (7-2)
9. Tennessee (8-1)
10. Ole Miss (8-2)
11. Miami (9-1)
12. Notre Dame (8-1)
13. SMU (8-1)
14. Boise State (8-1)
15. Texas A&M (7-2)
16. Clemson (7-2)



Will Howard

Day Doesn't See Light In Subbing Starting QB

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

In 44 years as publisher of Buckeye Sports Bulletin I've seen darn near everything when it comes to putting the paper together and content issues. But for this edition of BSB we had one that I had never seen before. It involved our "Game Analysis" feature, a staple in our football game coverage for as long as I can remember. You know how it works. We recap "what worked well," "what didn't work" and the "play of the game." Only after Ohio State's 45-0 shellacking of Purdue, we had a bit of a problem. We couldn't come up with an entry for "What Didn't Work."

We kicked it around for a little bit, and BSB associate editor Greg Wilson finally came up with this:

"The offense had over 400 yards and the team had 45 points, the defense didn't give up any points, and special teams had a blocked punt that set the offense up inside the 10-yard line. There wasn't much in this game that didn't work. Anything going in this section wouldn't be a major concern moving forward and would be extremely nit-picky."

Then he listed a couple of little things, mostly centered on the fact that cornerback Davison Igbinosun commits pass interference on virtually every play, getting flagged all too often.

Well now it's my turn to get "nit-picky."

Longtime readers know how I can get obsessed with things. For years it was Ohio State's use, or lack of use more accurately, of the tight ends. Now that the tight ends have finally been incorporated into the offense – Gee Scott Jr. and Jelani Thurman each had catches against Purdue, Scott's for a nifty touchdown – I'll return to something I have also complained about for a long as Ryan Day has been head coach of the Buckeyes.

Why does Day insist on leaving his starting quarterback in long after a game is in hand? Will Howard played into the fourth quarter against the Boilermakers and the score was 45-0 when he finally took a seat.

The problem is twofold. The longer you leave your starting quarterback in, the longer he is exposed to potential injury. And if he does get injured, the reserve quarterback is lacking in experience because he gets so little playing time. Think Lincoln Kienholz in last year's Cotton Bowl.

It's not like Howard needs the work. He is in his fifth year of major-college football and has nine games under his belt in the Day/Chip Kelly system. Besides, he goes up against one of the best defenses in the country every day in practice.

The Buckeyes have games with upstart Indiana, rival Michigan and potential stops in the Big Ten Championship Game and the expanded CFP Playoff. Devin Brown and Julian Sayin need the reps, not Howard.

There was that one sequence against Purdue where both offensive lineman Carson Hinzman and Howard appeared to be injured. Great! Arguably the two most indispensable players on the team right now injured. Admit it. Your heart skipped a beat. Well, mine did. Fortunately, it appears both Howard and Hinzman are OK.

I'll go ahead and make a bold suggestion. Against a team like Purdue, why not put your backup quarterback in the game in a meaningful situation, rather than throwing him out there with the reserves when the game has long been decided.

I distinctly recall Urban Meyer doing this with Tate Martell against Rutgers in 2018.

Martell came into the game in relief of Dwayne Haskins with 12:26 to play in the second quarter and the Buckeyes leading 21-0. He promptly threw a 51-yard TD pass to Terry McLaurin. That was a much more meaningful situation than those handoffs against the scrubs in the fourth quarter.

Martell finished the game 10 for 10 passing for 121 yards and ran eight times for another 95 yards and a 47-yard touchdown, that one coming in mop-up time in the fourth quarter of the 52-3 Buckeye win.

The year before, Haskins relieved J.T. Barrett in the second quarter after Barrett led the Buckeyes to a 37-7 lead over UNLV. Haskins finished out most of the game, going 15 of 23 for 228 yards, two touchdowns and an interception. Joe Burrow got mop-up duty in that game, going 4 for 4 for 37 yards in the fourth quarter of the 54-21 OSU win.

As we all know, when Barrett got knocked out of the Michigan game at the end of that season, Haskins was ready.

Now, far be it from me to be telling Ryan Day what to do. But Urban Meyer won three national championships and had a perfect record against Michigan. Maybe he was onto something, and Day can take his cue from there.

Finishing Strong

Someone joked on our BuckeyeSports.com Forum that while having his cereal one morning he saw Jack Sawyer's picture on his milk carton, listed as a missing person. I think most would agree that they were expecting a little more from Sawyer, along with his five-star running mate at defensive end, JT Tuimolou. But I think even more was expected of Sawyer, and he has received a little more criticism. After all, he was the one who spearheaded the effort to get so many NFL-ready Buckeyes to return and make a last effort at beating Michigan, winning a Big Ten championship and then winning it all for the first time since 2014.

The two seemed to snap out of their doldrums against the Boilermakers, and they did it together, combining to create a scoop-and-score, with JTT knocking the ball loose and Sawyer scooping and scoring.

For the game, Sawyer had five tackles, a half sack and the fumble return. Tuimolou had four tackles, 1½ TFLs, a half sack, a quarterback hurry, a pass breakup and the forced fumble. If these guys are going to come around, now is the time.

Just a reminder for those who have been critical of Sawyer. He was having another quiet season last year and he closed with five sacks in the final three games of the season.

This would be a great time for Sawyer to go on another one of those runs, and the Buckeyes might just reach their goals yet.

From The Pages Of BSB

A couple of things caught my attention in this issue's edition of my favorite feature, From the Pages of BSB.

From 10 years ago, I was a little surprised to see that Ohio State's 49-37 win over Michigan State in 2014 was Urban Meyer's first win over a top-10 team while at Ohio State. By the time of that game, Meyer had been in Columbus for well over two years with only two losses – one, ironically, to Michigan State in the 2013 Big Ten Championship Game.

But, as I have been saying to people about this year's Indiana team, you can only play the schedule you are presented with, and similarly, Meyer simply had rarely had a chance to beat a top-10 team while head man at Ohio State up until that point, with the notable exception of that conference championship game with the Spartans.

In Meyer's undefeated season of 2012, the Buckeyes beat No. 20 MSU, No. 21 Nebraska and

No. 20 Michigan. In 2013 Ohio State beat No. 23 Wisconsin and No. 16 Northwestern, before losing to No. 10 Michigan State and No. 12 Clemson in the Orange Bowl.

In the national championship season of 2014, after the Buckeyes knocked off the No. 8 Spartans of Mark Dantonio, they beat No. 25 Minnesota, No. 13 Wisconsin in the Big Ten Championship Game and No. 1 Alabama and No. 2 Oregon in the inaugural CFP national championship.

And in the "My, how things have changed," department, 20 years ago, in 2004, in a rare show of unity, fans from both Michigan and Ohio State raised such an uproar that in a matter of just 48 hours they were able to ward off a plan to have SBC (now AT&T) sponsor The Game.

"We were excited about the positive impact the agreement would have had on the department of athletics, the university and the community," said OSU athletic director Andy Geiger said at the time. "But as we attempted to move forward, it became apparent that this agreement could detract from the great tradition of the game itself."

"Given that possibility and the fast-approaching date of this year's game, the two universities agreed it was in their best interest not to pursue the arrangement at this time."

In today's money-first environment, the rivals would have taken the money, tradition and fan unhappiness be damned. Or at the least the school administrations would have put up more than a 48-hour fight.

1974 OSU-Michigan State Game

Speaking of Michigan State, as I say every week, I have really enjoyed Mark Rea's series on Ohio State football seasons from years ending in the number four. We are creeping into the years where I have actually seen some of the games, seasons and personalities chronicled. The controversial battle between the Buckeyes and Spartans from 1974, examined in this issue, is probably one of the first Ohio State games I ever saw.

Some odd things stuck with me from Mark's flashback. The first is how any Buckeye fan of a certain age knows who Levi Jackson is. You know, the Spartan fullback who burst for an 88-yard touchdown in the waning moments of that game to give MSU its first lead and the controversial final margin of victory, 16-13.

Jackson gained 942 yards that season and 1,063 the following year but seems to have drifted into obscurity after that. But if you ask a Buckeye fan, "Do you know who Levi Jackson is?" they will quickly answer, "Oh yeah, the guy with the 88-yard touchdown in that controversial game at Michigan State." People even remember the exact yardage of the run.

I also enjoyed Woody's comments from his legendary television show, following that loss.

"I'm in no mood to be on this show," he told the late Saturday night audience. "I can't tell you how bitter I am. The older you get and the more you win, the more bitter you get with a loss. This was the greatest team we've ever had."

I just can't see a coach, in today's age of million-dollar media contracts, saying, "I'm in no mood to be on this show."

I also think his comment, "This was the greatest team we've ever had," may have been a little extreme, uttered in the heat of the moment. I might consider the 1968 or '69 teams, or even the 1973 team from the year before which allowed only 64 points the entire 11-game season and beat USC in the Rose Bowl, as better.

But the thing that really stuck out to me about

that 1974 season was the fact that earlier in the campaign in a 49-7 win over Illinois, the Buckeyes racked up 517 yards rushing, second most in OSU history behind the only the whopping 718 during a whopping of Mount Union in 1930. It's just hard for me to visualize a team racking up 517 yards on the ground.

Here are some facts about the game:

The Buckeyes gained their yardage on 72 plays, averaging 7.2 yards a carry. The Buckeyes also threw 13 passes, meaning the Buckeyes ran a total of 85 plays. With all those running plays, the clock was presumably running most of the time, and Ohio State still got that many plays off – and that's with huddles.

Archie Griffin carried 20 times for 144 yards, and his brother Ray carried eight times for 86 yards, giving the Griffin boys alone 230 yards rushing. Add a catch by Archie for 27 yards and the Griffins had almost as many yards as the Illini, who racked up 298 yards in total.

Buckeye quarterback Cornelius Greene ran for 127 yards, and three other Buckeyes had 29 yards or more.

The Buckeyes ran off so many plays that Illinois had five players with 10 tackles or more, led by linebacker Ty McMillan, who had 17.

For comparison, the most rushing yards the 2024 Buckeyes, with their dynamic duo of TreVeyon Henderson and Quinshon Judkins, have racked up is 280 in the 49-14 win over Marshall.

Back To Business

With postal problems seeming to ease a little bit now that the election is over, it's time for me to turn my attention back to business.

Well not without a couple more words about postal delivery. Don't forget that this issue of BSB was mailed the Tuesday after Veterans Day. In our 44 years of business, weeks with Monday holidays have always had slow mail delivery. So, keep that in mind before you bombard our beleaguered staff with phone calls.

For more consistent delivery, you can upgrade your current subscription to first-class mail in an envelope through the Michigan game for just \$16, or through the Recruiting Wrap up in February for \$26. For credit card orders give us a call at (614) 486-2202 or (800) 760-2862, or send your check or money order to P.O. Box 12453, Columbus, Ohio, 43212. You must mention either "Football Upgrade" or "Recruiting Upgrade."

Just a heads up. We will be mailing our Michigan Preview issue on Tuesday, Nov. 26. With Thanksgiving two days later, there is a good chance many of you getting your paper via regular mail will not receive your BSB before The Game. Again, we suggest the first-class upgrade for \$16.

Now, getting back to business: For those of you who want to help BSB, we are still offering gift subscriptions to libraries, barber shops, active military Buckeyes and anyone under the age of 35 for just \$19.95, a rate we rarely use anymore because it does not cover the annual cost of printing and mailing the paper. However, it increases our advertising base and introduces new readers to BSB. Simply send your check or money order or credit card information to the previously mentioned address or call one of the listed phone numbers. Mention any of the special gift offers.

Also, this is a great time to send four free trial issues of BSB to any Buckeye fans you know. The issues would include the Indiana issue and the Michigan issues. Just send us the names and addresses of any potential subscribers. *Please* do not send us names you have already submitted. We periodically reach out to names you have already sent with special offers, so if they are interested, they will subscribe on their own.

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