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Vol. 44, No. 12

"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Dec. 7, 2024

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Coming into the 2024 season, perhaps no team and no head coach had more pressure to perform than Ohio State and head coach Ryan Day.

Over the past three years, Buckeye fans have been treated to an embarrassment of riches of high-flying offenses and top-notch NFL prospects such as Marvin Harrison Jr., C.J. Stroud and Garrett Wilson, among others. Still, in each of those seasons the end result has been the same: a disappointing loss to archrival Michigan that acted as a bruising body blow to the program, knocking them out of Big Ten and national title contention.

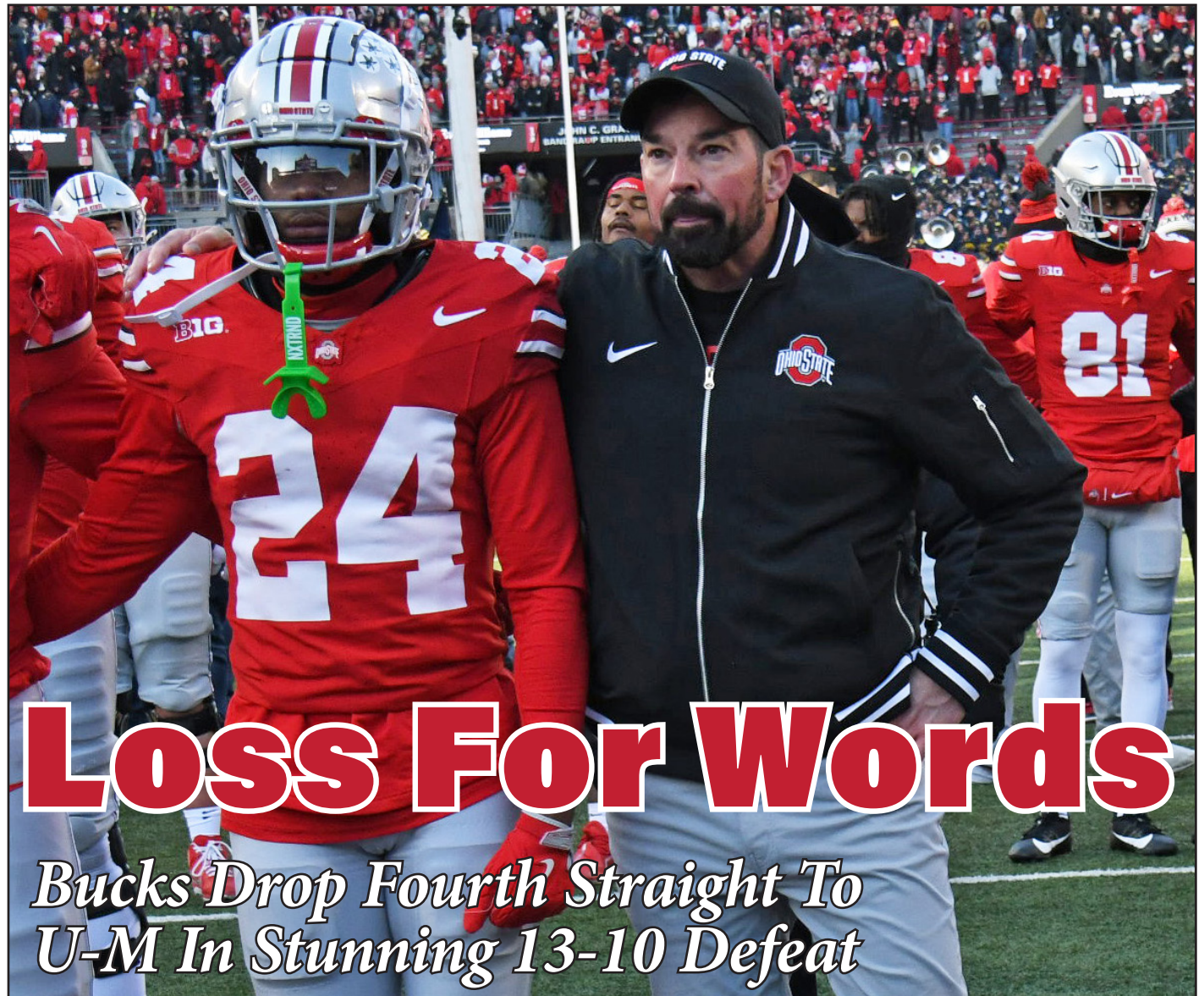
These three mirror-image ends to the season caused many fans to become restless, with some even calling for Day's job, likening him to former OSU head coach John Cooper for his repeated shortcomings against the hated Wolverines.

It was these types of reactions and criticisms that also caused Ohio State to "run it back" for the 2024 season, bringing nearly double-digit starters back for their senior seasons – a group that included team leaders Denzel Burke, TreVeyon Henderson, Jack Sawyer, Cody Simon and much more – while also digging into its NIL piggy bank to fortify the roster, devoting millions of dollars' worth of funds from collectives to bring in key transfers such as quarterback Will Howard, safety Caleb Downs and running back Quinshon Judkins.

Every single offseason decision – the dollars spent, the personnel acquired and the staff assembled – was made with one thing in mind: to emerge victorious in The Game and end the three-game losing streak to the Wolverines. And those who were a part of this team for years knew that.

"(Beating Michigan) would mean everything," Sawyer said at Big Ten Media Days in July. "It would mean everything to me. That's the main reason why we came back. That's why we signed our names on our letters of intent. That's what we were coming here to do. Especially me being from Columbus, that would mean the world to me, and that's what I plan on doing this fall."

"Everything in the entire program has been built to win this game, so now we just have to trust that and go play with confi-



Loss For Words

Bucks Drop Fourth Straight To U-M In Stunning 13-10 Defeat

SONNY BROCKWAY

DAZED AND CONFUSED – Head coach Ryan Day has a blank stare as he stands next to sophomore cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. (24) for the playing of "Carmen Ohio" following the shocking 13-10 loss to unranked Michigan on Nov. 30 in Ohio Stadium. Soon after, a brawl broke out at midfield between the teams when the Wolverines tried to plant their flag.

dence, with great energy, great passion, and playing for your brothers and everybody just doing their job," stated Day on Nov. 26, just four days before the rivalry game.

Devoting all the time and resources to defeating your rivals and ending the losing streak is an admirable practice, but the year-long obsession to emerge victorious may also have put added pressure on everyone

involved, leading to unwanted mistakes in critical moments of the game.

Whether it was due to the team playing tight, the staff being outcoached or the moment just being too big, Day's Buckeyes did exactly that in the 120th edition of The Game on Nov. 30, leading to an all-time disaster for everyone involved with the Scarlet and Gray.

Playing in front of an energized Ohio Stadium home crowd of 106,005 fans who were looking to celebrate a blowout win in below-freezing temperatures, Ohio State experienced a nightmare outing from start to finish. Plagued by the lack of a running game, some untimely turnovers and a bevy of crucial late-game miscues, the Buckeyes crumbled on one of the sport's biggest stages of the year, letting an upset-minded, 6-5 Wolverines team waltz into Columbus as around 20-point underdogs and exit the stage as victors by a score of 13-10 to extend their winning streak in the rivalry to four games and

hand OSU a stunning defeat.

For Ohio State, all of the time and resources spent toward winning The Game and ending the streak in the offseason was for naught. It's a shocking reality that no one in the college football world was expecting, and one that left the Buckeye leader searching for answers in the postgame.

"Obviously, I'm extremely disappointed and angry that we didn't execute well enough," Day said. "It's not easy to accept. I have to take the ownership. I'm the one, ultimately, that makes the final decisions on things. I felt like we were in a really good place coming into this game. I felt like we were prepared to play well in this game, and you could see maybe some of the stuff that happened in the offensive line, shuffling

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Buckeye Leaves

No. 2 Ohio State suffered one of its worst losses in program history on Nov. 30 at Ohio Stadium, falling 13-10 to archrival Michigan in a stunning upset for its fourth straight defeat against the Wolverines. Here are some choices – or lack thereof – from Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff members and readers from the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum for players who were worthy of receiving Buckeye Leaves in the loss.

Patrick Engels, BSB: Ohio State did not have many standouts in The Game this year, but among the few bright spots was sophomore safety Caleb Downs. Downs continued his sensational season by thriving all over the field again for Jim Knowles' defense, recording 11 tackles (four solo) and an interception.

His third-quarter interception appeared to put the Buckeyes in prime position to score if it weren't for some poor OSU offense and some kicking struggles from Jayden Fielding, but even if it didn't lead to points, it was still a sensational play and an impressive shoestring catch.

Downs helped keep the game in reach for the Buckeyes when they were down, making him one of the biggest impact players on Nov. 30.

Bobby Gorbett, BSB: My Buckeye Leaf is going to freshman wide receiver Jeremiah Smith. Smith may not have had the gaudy receiving yard numbers he's been accustomed to in previous games, but he gave the offense life in the first half, drawing two pass-interference penalties on Michigan defenders to give his team much-needed yardage.

Smith's solid first half was marked by the Buckeyes' only touchdown of the game when he came wide open in the end zone after Wolverines cornerback Aamir Hall fell down. He made the easy catch on the throw from fifth-year quarterback Will Howard and helped tie the game up at 10 right before halftime.

Smith finished the game with 35 receiving yards and the score on five catches.

Cameron Moore, BSB: It's an incredibly tough one to call this week and likely the worst consolation prize ever handed out, but earning my Buckeye Leaf in Ohio State's regular-season finale will be linebacker Cody Simon.

Albeit not the day that the senior wanted on the field, Simon poured in a solid effort defensively, notching nine total tackles (one solo), while adding a half tackle for loss. The "Block O" honoree has been one of Ohio State's most silver-est of bullets throughout the season, and his impact was felt throughout the loss to the Wolverines.

Another reason I'll throw Simon my Buckeye Leaf is his leadership after the game, speaking for an entire side of the ball in his postgame conference. With tears in his eyes, it was easy to see the loss hurt the leader. He'll be a main contributor in trying to engineer a season turnaround in hopes of a national championship.

Greg Wilson, BSB: Jack Sawyer gets my Buckeye Leaf for nearly saving the game for Ohio

State midway through the fourth quarter. Michigan had a long drive to get all the way down to the OSU 3-yard line, and with four downs to play with, it seemed inevitable that the Wolverines were at the very least going to be able to put three points on the board.

On fourth down, Sawyer wasn't able to get any push on the Michigan offensive line and dropped back into coverage when quarterback Davis Warren dropped back to pass looking for a wide-open receiver in the end zone. It would have been an easy score to take the lead with about eight minutes remaining in the game, putting the Buckeyes in a terrible situation, but Sawyer was able to get in between the play and pick the ball off.

He finished the game with four tackles, one quarterback hurry and the interception.

BSB Subscribers:

Michael Bauer: Bah, humbug!

Mark Rea: You're kidding, right? Lose to Michigan and there are no Leaves.

BuckeyeScott: You can hand out some "could've, should've, would've" Leaves.

Terrier Buck: Suggest after this hideous loss, BSB asks, 'Who's most blameworthy?' My nominee is Jayden Fielding; two makeable field goals missed that would have won the game.

John Lanning: Well, it looks like I'm in the minority. It was a tough loss. However, Caleb Downs had another great game. He should be rewarded. Jack Sawyer had a nice game and he gets one. Postgame not so much. Finally, I thought Carnell Tate had a Leaf-earning game. I realize Saturday was the end of all that is good and holy for those worshipping at the altar of perfection, but it was only a game and I noticed the sun came up again today.

PeyoteBuck: OK, like Wavy Gravy said at Woodstock, 'There is always a little bit of heaven in a disaster area.' This week's heaven was Caleb Downs and Carnell Tate. Adam and Eve got the rest of the leaves.

Poster That Harley Built: I give Jack Sawyer a lifetime achievement Leaf. The man gave us a shot in The Game and has been a true Buckeye since the day he drove over from Pickerington.

Bob Cody: Absolutely agree (with Poster That Harley Built)!

R1TBDBITL: Absolutely agree. (Sawyer) gets mine as well.

Otis Johnson: Jack Sawyer gets one for having a freaking spine and grabbing that ugly flag from them. If Ross Bjork cans Day, he gets one.

From The Message Board

No. 2 Ohio State endured an all-time excruciating loss on Nov. 30 at Ohio Stadium, falling 13-10 to unranked, 6-5 Michigan as a 20-point favorite to drop out of Big Ten title contention and lose its fourth straight game to the rival Wolverines. After giving them a few hours to digest the loss and collect their thoughts, we asked readers on the BuckeyeSports.com Fan Forum what they think went wrong for the Buckeyes, what they believe comes next for head coach Ryan Day's program both in the short- and long-term future and any other thoughts they had on the game.

"Our defense played well, our offense did not play up to their capabilities and our kicker, well, our kicker had a very bad day. I am fairly certain we make the playoffs so the season is not over yet. We need to learn from it, rest, heal and regroup over the next few weeks. Suck it up and see what we can do to make this season continue. I'll talk about next year after this year is completed. As it pertains to this year's edition of The Game, I think the quote by Jim McKay, 'The thrill of victory, and the agony of defeat' is quite appropriate."

– BuckeyeScott

"Michigan seemed better prepared for the opponent than Ohio State did. Michigan completed nine passes in the game. They did the things they needed to win, and Ohio State didn't. Upsets have not been unusual in this rivalry since 1952, but this outcome today should not have happened at all! Most blameworthy is Jayden Fielding. He missed two makeable field goals which could have won the game. The makeshift offensive line was a huge problem, too.

"Day is 47-1 vs all other B1G opponents, including the one-point loss at Oregon, so a coaching change is not in order!"

– Terrier Buck

"I was shocked at the vehemence at Eleven Warriors demanding Day's head. There are rumors of trouble in the locker room after the game, but it may be just that, as no one has offered up any specifics. This all feels like John Cooper 2.0. I'm not sure what will happen, but I hope whatever decisions are made, that they will be thought through carefully and thoroughly."

– Michael Bauer

"It's all mental at this point., You cannot play this game not to lose. You have to play like you played all season. You can tell Chip Kelly

didn't have the reins as much either. You cannot do that when you're supposed to be the CEO coach. I really love Ryan Day, everyone on this Forum knows that. I don't know how to defend him after this one. Sucks."

– Tiffin Buckeye

"Several items need to be addressed:

"1. John Cooper made TTUN just another game. It seems Day has made TTUN the only game. Jim Tressel and Urban Meyer got it right. Get the psyche right.

"2. We need linemen. Big fast strong linemen. Our running game has slumped, and it's not that we don't have running backs. Our offensive line and defensive line recruiting must get much better.

"3. I bet several contributors here could have had the same game result for only \$10 million. Not sure of the answer, but for Day's salary, figure out this NIL and portal. We are going to be in trouble after this game as players look to run and teams use this in recruiting against us."

– John Lanning

"Where to next? Reload! I have to say, this loss, with all this talent, points to the coaches. I've seldom seen such mindless play-calling. Today, all I can say is, we have little to look forward to."

– PeyoteBuck

"I think before you look at Ryan Day, you have to revisit Justin Frye. Yes, we had some key injuries on the offensive line, but we are completely lacking in depth. Have the Armstrong twins lost their black stripes yet? Bill Greene's prophecy about the offensive line, as reported in BSB, has come true. Purdue would kill to have our offensive line room. But we are not Purdue."

– Poster That Harley Built

"For one, Ohio State was out-coached, especially with the offensive play-calling. A complete lack of imagination that is symptomatic of this team. Rather than score points, the offense gave them away: an interception deep in their own territory and two botched field goals.

"The Buckeyes may have been lulled into complacency given the betting odds on the game. A team may look great on paper, but they are only as good as they play on the field. As Mark Rea pointed out in a previous issue, firing the coach would not solve the problem. What this team needs is a good therapist."

– Slimjim

"The loss is inexcusable. Poor offensive play calling, and mistakes galore. Two otherwise easy field goals missed. We beat ourselves and played tight."

– Bob Cody

"I've mentioned this before. Why does Chip Kelly keep calling running plays up the middle? This is Xichigan's strong suit. Our offensive weapons thrive on the perimeter. We obviously didn't execute well, but I blame Chip for not getting the running backs a chance to succeed."

– R1TBDBITL

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Not A Fan Until Day Is Canned

Ryan Day, who now and forever will be known as John Cooper Jr., or JC2 for short, is now the proud owner of the worst loss in Ohio Stadium history. I never thought I'd see anything worse than 1996 Michigan or 1998 Michigan State, but JC2 beat them both.

To JC2: You need to look in the mirror and have a very honest, hard conversation with yourself ... If you can't beat a 6-5 Michigan team with your "NFL roster" then you can't beat Michigan, and if you can't beat Michigan then you are not the right man to be the head football coach at Ohio State. You have dug yourself into a hole so deep you can never get out of it.

My advice, pick up the phone, call the AD at the University of North Carolina and beg for the head football coach job.

To Ross Bjork: In case you haven't figured it out from all the phone calls, emails and text messages you've received in the last 24 hours from extremely angry and extremely wealthy people, the honeymoon is over. You are officially on the hot seat. If JC2 won't make the right and honorable decision, you need to

do it for him, and quickly.

My advice, pick up the phone, call Marcus Freeman, offer him anything and everything he wants and keep offering until he says, "Yes."

To the OSU players who got in a fight with Michigan players after the game because they planted their flag on the field: It would have been a good idea to stop that from happening about 60 minutes earlier. Maybe try that next time.

As for me, I will never watch another Ohio State football game as long as JC2 is head coach. Why waste my time? I already know how the season will end. JC2 will win every game except the ones that matter most.

**Michael Walrath
Three Forks, Mont.**

Byars Brought The Boom

Reading about Keith Byars (BSB, Nov. 30, 2024), an all-around athlete at the level of Havlicek and Kern, was a treat. His boyhood nickname was "Boomer" for the way he hit a baseball. That was his fourth-best sport. At Dayton Roth, he won a team

track championship and three relay firsts. He was a key part of two teams that are in the Ohio Basketball Hall of Fame after consecutive state titles. I saw him play many times, and opponents were very reluctant to take charges when he drove to the hoop. And, yes, he deserved the Heisman before breaking a bone in his right foot after he was first-team All-American. Despite never fully recovering, he played 13 years in the NFL, winning a Super Bowl with the Patriots and making the 75th Anniversary Team of the Eagles.

**Lee Caryer
Columbus**

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

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A Case Of Déjà Vu All Over Again

On the Tuesday afternoon before this year's Ohio State-Michigan game, while many subscribers took to the BSB Fan Forum message board to opine on how large the winning margin would be for the Buckeyes, I posted this cryptic message:

"Not to play the role of Debbie Downer, but the quotes from Will Howard and Ryan Day give me a little too much flashback to the Cooper years. There is such a thing as wanting something too much."

Now you know why I felt the way I did.

I can't begin to express how much I enjoyed the run of success against Michigan during the Jim Tressel and Urban Meyer eras. While others began to tire of victory piled on top of victory, I tried to explain that every win against your archrival was to be glorified, savored, sanctified. That run of 16 wins in 18 tries between 2001 and 2018 was a masterful work of art, and something I vowed never to take for granted.

That was because I lived through the excruciating 13-year era when John Cooper was head coach, a tenure era that produced only two wins and a tie against 10 losses vs. Michigan.

In case you're too young to have experienced it, or too old to remember, the last time Ohio State lost four times in a row to Michigan coincided with the first four games of the Cooper era, and those losses came about in a variety of ways.

The Buckeyes couldn't hold a 31-27 lead in the final two minutes in 1988, turned the ball over twice and missed two extra-point conversions during a 10-point loss in 1989, botched a fourth-and-1 option play at their own 29-yard line that led to a field goal on the game's final play in 1990, and then got their doors blown off in 1991 while allowing Desmond Howard to become a legend in his own mind.

It was the beginning of an era during which Cooper and his teams seemed powerless to beat their archrival. Whether it was an All-America defensive back slipping at the exact wrong time or a Michigan running back no one ever heard of rushing for more than 300 yards, it didn't seem to matter what the Buckeyes did. Why? My theory then and now is that they simply wanted it too much.

They tried everything from rip-roaring speeches during Senior Tackle to trying to pretend it was just another game and everything in between. But every time a player was asked what the game meant to them, eyes would widen, lips would get dry, and the answer was a simple "Everything."

Cooper, who had an .802 winning percentage at Ohio State discounting Michigan games and postseason bowls, said repeatedly, "What fans don't realize sometimes is that no one wants to beat Michigan more than John Cooper."

If only desperately wanting something made it so.

Unfortunately, I heard some of the same things emanating from the Woody Hayes Athletic Center this year, and quite frankly, it sent a bitter chill up and down my spine.

"I love this university as much as the next guy," Howard said on the Tuesday before the game. "But I really love my brothers. I love Coach Day. I would do anything for those guys. And I want to get this done for them and for Buckeye Nation."

"When I said I was coming here, I didn't want to be half-in on this thing. If I'm going to be a Buckeye, this is part of being a Buckeye. This game means everything. I'm grateful to be a part of it and grateful to be here and grateful for all those guys that came back. I want to get this done for them."

Then, during the traditional Skull Session, an impassioned Day told a packed audience inside St. John Arena what they probably already knew.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK Mark Rea

"Our No. 1 goal every year is to win this game," the OSU head coach shouted. "We put everything we possibly have in our process every single day to work on this game. We don't wear blue. We don't say the 'M' word."

"But this is not about them today," Day added, ratcheting his voice up another octave. "This is about us. This is about our team. This is about our band. This is about our fans. This is about our university. This is about our state. This is about our toughness. This is about our work ethic. This is about our integrity, our character, our resilience and who we are as Buckeyes."

It was an extension of what the coach had told his weekly radio show audience when he described the OSU-Michigan game "like going to war. You only pack what you need. ... What you use best – whatever weapons you use best – that's what you bring to war."

And then the war begins, and all that talk is just that. Talk.

Coaching Not To Lose

The weapons Ohio State brought to the war remained largely holstered as Day and offensive coordinator Chip Kelly apparently determined that testing the strength of the Michigan team – running the ball between the tackles – was the way to stubbornly prove the previous three games in the rivalry were aberrations.

As a result, the Buckeyes failed to utilize their advantage in the passing game and ran the ball 26 times for 77 yards. That is an average of 3.0 yards per carry. Take out a 15-yard run from Quinshon Judkins in the second quarter and a 17-yard, third-quarter run from the Ole Miss transfer, and that average craters to 1.9 yards on 24 attempts.

That kept the Ohio State offense off-kilter and behind the chains for much of the game with the notable exception of a nine-play touchdown drive at the end of the first half that covered 75 yards in a minute and 45 seconds. During that possession, the Buckeyes faced only two third-down situations. Why? Because they were focused on moving the ball through the air.

It's left for conjecture how much the stilted game plan affected Howard. The guy with more 80-percent completion games in a single season than anyone in program history managed to connect on only 19 of 33 attempts (57.6 percent) for 175 yards and a touchdown. Both the percentage and yardage total were season lows.

Of course, it's impossible to wave away the two crucial errors made by the OSU quarterback that resulted in a pair of red-zone interceptions.

The first was a momentum-killer, coming early in the second quarter just after the defense had engineered a goal-line stand. Two plays later, Michigan was in the end zone with a 7-3 lead. And the second came in the third quarter when Ohio State looked about to finally take control of the game only for Howard to throw the ball directly to Wolverines DB Makari Paige at the Michigan 9-yard line.

It also seemed to me that Day and Kelly

threw away the aggressive nature that had led to 24 tries on fourth down (and 17 conversions) over the previous 11 games and played with the dreaded mentality of coaching not to lose.

That showed up on Ohio State's first possession of the game. The Buckeyes had moved out from their own 31-yard line with Howard getting the ball out quickly to Carnell Tate and Jeremiah Smith. But despite advancing all the way to the Michigan 11, rather than trying to take early control of the proceedings with a fourth-and-5 play, OSU settled for a 29-yard field goal from Jayden Fielding to get the first points on the scoreboard.

That possession fizzled because Day and/or Kelly decided it would be prudent to run the ball on the first two plays after achieving a first down at the 16, running plays that netted only 5 yards. The same mentality was in play midway through the second quarter when Ohio State had a first down at the Michigan 23, and two subsequent running plays netted minus-2 yards. When a third-down pass fell incomplete, Fielding came on but missed a 38-yard field-goal attempt.

Nothing had apparently happened to change the minds of the play-callers late in the third quarter. Just two plays after Howard's second interception, OSU safety Caleb Downs grabbed a pick of his own to give his team the ball back at the Michigan 16-yard line.

And what did the offensive minds of Ryan Day and Chip Kelly do with that good fortune? A first-down run up the gut that was stuffed for no gain, a throwback pass to tight end Gee Scott Jr. that Michigan sniffed out for no gain, and a delayed handoff to TreVeyon Henderson, again for no gain.

Fielding returned to the field, hooked his 34-yard field-goal try, and for all intents and purposes, that was the ballgame.

The defense continued to try to salvage things, including turning Michigan away in the red zone again when defensive end Jack Sawyer speared his first career interception at the goal line. But in a game during which the Buckeyes' mistakes on offense left their defense absolutely no margin for error, a missed tackle on a third-and-6 play allowed Michigan running back Kaleb Mullings to run for 27 yards and eventually set up Dominic Zvada's game-winning field goal from 21 yards.

Some Final Thoughts

I'm not really sure how to process the outcome. I truly believe the only team on the Ohio Stadium field that could have beaten Ohio State was Ohio State, and that certainly happened. You can't throw two red-zone interceptions and miss two field goals inside 40 yards in length and expect to win – especially against your rival.

I honestly don't know where the Buckeyes go from here. When you push all of your chips into the middle of the table and come up short, it's a humbling experience.

The crazy thing is that the last remaining goal for this team remains attainable.

Ohio State is going to make the 12-team playoff, and as insane as it sounds, the loss to Michigan might actually be of some benefit. I mean, they've already lost two games, lost a chance to play for a Big Ten title, and lost to their rival for the fourth time in a row. What else do they possibly have to lose at this point?

Maybe lessons learned from the latest failure against Michigan will allow the players to play loose and coaches to coach to win rather than not to lose.

Then again, I've seen how repeated losses to the Wolverines can weigh on a program, and it isn't pretty.

OHIO STATE INSIDER

OSU Drops To No. 7 In AP Poll

After its shocking 13-10 loss to Michigan on Nov. 30, Ohio State fell to No. 7 in the latest AP top 25 poll released on Dec. 1, dropping five spots from the No. 2 ranking it had held since the Week 12 edition of the poll.

For the seventh consecutive week, Oregon is on top of the rankings at No. 1, receiving all 62 first-place votes after completing an undefeated 12-0 regular season with a 49-21 win over Washington at home on Nov. 30. The Buckeye loss allowed No. 2 Texas, No. 3 Penn State, No. 4 Notre Dame and No. 5 Georgia to each jump up one spot from the previous week after their respective Week 13 wins.

The rest of the top 10 is composed of No. 6 Tennessee, No. 8 SMU, No. 9 Indiana and No. 10 Boise State, each of which also rose one spot in the rankings. The Broncos enter the top 10 for the first time since the 2011 season after a 34-18 victory over Oregon State on Nov. 29 that improved their record to 11-1, their lone loss

coming to Oregon on Sept. 7.

Dropping out of the top 10 was Miami (Fla.), which fell six spots from No. 8 to No. 14 after suffering a 42-38 upset defeat to former Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord and No. 23 Syracuse to knock them out of the ACC Championship Game. That game will now feature SMU and No. 18 Clemson, which has a chance to become a bid stealer in the College Football Playoff despite falling 17-14 to now-No. 13 South Carolina during rivalry week.

Each of these rankings means nothing in terms of what the College Football Playoff rankings might look like when the newest version is revealed on Dec. 3, but if the current AP rankings were the CFP standings, the Buckeyes would end up with the No. 9 seed in the bracket, set to match up against No. 8 seed Tennessee at Neyland Stadium.

In that scenario, the top four seeds and byes would go to Oregon, Texas, SMU and Boise State, while the first-round matchups would be No. 5 Penn State vs. No. 12 Arizona State in State College, Pa.; No. 6 Notre Dame vs. No. 11 Alabama in South Bend, Ind.; No. 7 Georgia vs. No. 10 Indiana in Athens, Ga.; and the matchup between the Buckeyes and Volunteers in Knoxville, Tenn.

Each of those hypothetical matchups could very well change with a hectic conference championship weekend next week that could significantly alter the final CFP rankings and bracket revealed on Dec. 8.

Bjork Still Confident In Day

One day after the Buckeyes dropped their

2024 Ohio State Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Result/Time (ET)	TV	Record, Last Result
Aug. 31	AKRON	W, 52-6	CBS	4-8, 21-14 win over Toledo
Sept. 7	WESTERN MICHIGAN	W, 56-0	BTN	6-6, 26-18 win over Eastern Michigan
Sept. 21	MARSHALL	W, 49-14	FOX	9-3, 35-33 win over James Madison
Sept. 28	at Michigan State	W, 38-7	Peacock	5-7, 41-14 loss to Rutgers
Oct. 5	IOWA	W, 35-7	CBS	8-4, 13-10 win over Nebraska
Oct. 12	at Oregon	L, 32-31	NBC	12-0, 49-21 win over Washington
Oct. 26	NEBRASKA	W, 21-17	FOX	6-6, 13-10 loss to Iowa
Nov. 2	at Penn State	W, 20-13	FOX	11-1, 44-7 win over Maryland
Nov. 9	PURDUE	W, 45-0	FOX	1-11, 66-0 loss to Indiana
Nov. 16	at Northwestern	W, 31-7	BTN	4-8, 38-28 loss to Illinois
Nov. 23	INDIANA	W, 38-15	FOX	11-1, 66-0 win over Purdue
Nov. 30	MICHIGAN	L, 13-10	FOX	7-5, 13-10 win over Ohio State

fourth straight game to Michigan as nearly 20-point favorites, Ohio State athletic director Ross Bjork said that while he will examine the reasons behind the losses at a later date, he is still confident that head coach Ryan Day is the right person to lead the program.

"Our full focus right now is on the College Football Playoff and making a strong run," Bjork told The Columbus Dispatch. "We have a ton to play for. We have a great team made up of talented players and great young men. Coach Day does a great job leading our program. He's our coach."

Bjork went on to tell the Dispatch that Day has built a strong foundation and culture in his six seasons leading Ohio State, creating a program that is among the nation's best in several categories and competes for championships each season, including this 2024 campaign.

"There's a ton of stability across the board

within the program," Bjork said. "We're always in the top five under his leadership. We're right there. We have great fan support, great donor support.

"There's going to be plenty of time to dissect what happened in the rivalry game the last couple years. But right now, we have to keep the main thing the main thing, and that's (to) focus on the values of the program, focus on why we lead the young men, focus on the mission and the playoff.

"Our program is built to last, and Coach Day has done that," he added. "He has put us in a great spot."

Day's résumé at Ohio State is a complicated one. Since taking over in 2019, he has turned the Buckeyes into one of the more successful programs in college football, holding a 63-10 record in those six seasons and a 45-5 mark in the conference. But that record also includes

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the four straight losses to Michigan and a 4-6 record against AP top-five teams, both of which have limited the Buckeyes to zero Big Ten championships and one College Football Playoff appearance since 2021.

Day's most recent loss to Michigan has sparked intense criticism from fans who are growing frustrated with the Buckeyes' lack of success against their archrival. When asked if he was concerned that Day had lost the support of donors and the fan base, Bjork said it is not the right time to address those potential developments.

"I think there's going to be a time and a place to analyze that piece of it," he said. "But (Day) acknowledged after the game that he gets it. He gets the reaction. He gets the intensity of this game in particular. He gets the feedback and the pushback."

As Ohio State awaits its likely seeding in the College Football Playoff – its fourth appearance in the playoff in the Day era – Bjork indicated that it is time to focus on making a run at a national title, one which has not been won by the Buckeyes since former head coach Urban Meyer roamed the sidelines in 2014.

"Let's go make a run in the playoff," he said when asked if he could be swayed by the negative public opinion of Day. "That's all I'm going to say. Let's go make a run in the playoff. That's what we have to do."

OSU, U-M Fined \$100K By Big Ten

After the postgame brawl that took place between Ohio State and Michigan players on the field, it was revealed that both programs will be fined \$100,000 by the Big Ten for violation of the conference's sportsmanship policy.

The conference released a statement on the matter the day after the game.

"The Big Ten Conference has determined that the actions of both teams following the Michigan-Ohio State football game on Saturday, November 30, 2024, violated the Big Ten Sportsmanship Policy," the statement read. "Not only did the actions of both teams violate fundamental elements of sportsmanship such as respect and civility, the nature of the incident also jeopardized the safety of participants and bystanders."

To finish the statement, the conference specified that it "considers this matter concluded," meaning that no players will face any suspension for postseason games, barring any punishment from the NCAA if it decides to take action.

Ohio State released a statement shortly after the Big Ten announced the fines, accepting the fine imposed by the conference.

"We respect the Big Ten Conference's decision in this matter," it read. "What happened postgame yesterday was unfortunate. Good sportsmanship is always important in everything we do at Ohio State. Moving forward, we will continue to examine and address our postgame protocols to ensure our student-athletes, coaches, visiting teams and staff safely exit the field."

31 Buckeyes Honored For Senior Day Vs. U-M

Despite the crushing defeat, Ohio State still got the chance to celebrate its senior class, honoring 31 Buckeyes on the field prior to their season finale against the Wolverines.

The pregame Senior Day festivities – which had each player run out of the tunnel and be greeted by Day and their families – recognized 15 Buckeye starters, a group that included cornerbacks Denzel Burke and Jordan Hancock; defensive ends JT Tuimolou and Jack Sawyer; defensive linemen Ty Hamilton and Tyleik Williams; linebacker Cody Simon; offensive linemen Seth McLaughlin, Josh Fryar and Dono-

van Jackson; quarterback Will Howard; running back TreVeyon Henderson; safety Lathan Ransom; tight end Gee Scott Jr.; and wide receiver Emeka Egbuka.

Each of those starters will have exhausted their collegiate eligibility following the season.

Among the group of 16 Buckeye senior reserves was former linebacker Kourt Williams II, who medically retired from football over the summer due to him undergoing four knee surgeries and three shoulder surgeries over the past five years playing for the Buckeyes.

Since 2020 did not include a game against Michigan after the game was canceled due to an influx of COVID-19 cases within the Wolverine program, each of the 31 Buckeyes who were honored on Nov. 30 will leave Ohio State without a pair of gold pants.

Still, the senior class left a mark on the program during its time with the Buckeyes. Since the 2020 season, Ohio State has amassed a combined 50-9 record and a 36-5 conference mark and gone to the College Football Playoff two times, making it all the way to the national championship game with many current players on the roster in 2020.

O-Line Still Ravaged By Injury Against U-M

Ohio State had all of its expected starters healthy for its three-point loss to the Wolverines, with the only two key contributors on the injury report being left tackle Josh Simmons and McLaughlin, who are both out for the season with leg injuries.

The injuries to both Simmons and McLaughlin – as well as Zen Michalski, who missed his fourth straight game with his own lower-body ailment – caused Ohio State to put together a patchwork offensive line against the Wolverines, one which consisted of Jackson at left tackle, Austin Sierveld at left guard, Carson Hinzman at center, Tegra Tshabola at right guard and Fryar at right tackle.

Although this combination was sufficient to defeat then-No. 5 Indiana on Nov. 23, it wasn't enough to overcome a formidable Wolverine defensive line led by projected top-five NFL draft selection Mason Graham. The new-look line paved the way for Ohio State to rush for just 77 yards on 26 carries (3.0 average), while it also allowed four tackles for loss.

Wolverines Banged Up For The Game

Although Ohio State was mostly healthy for the 120th edition of The Game, the opposite could be said for Michigan, which was missing three key starters for the win.

The Wolverines had been operating all year without standout safety Rod Moore, who tore his ACL in the spring, but they were also playing against the Buckeyes without one of their more impactful secondary players this season, midseason AP All-American cornerback Will Johnson.

Johnson, a projected first-round pick in the 2024 NFL draft, missed his fifth straight game due to a turf toe injury he continues to recover from. Prior to his injury – which he suffered in the second half of the Wolverines' Oct. 19 road loss to Illinois – Johnson was on pace for another All-Big Ten year, recording 14 tackles, three passes broken up and two interceptions returned for touchdowns.

Johnson's absence did not deter the Wolverines from creating some major problems for the Buckeye passing offense, however. With graduate Aamir Hall Jr. taking his spot alongside starter Zeke Berry at cornerback, Michigan's secondary limited Howard to a season-low 175 passing yards on 19-of-33 passing and two interceptions, one of those coming by Johnson's replacement Hall in the second quarter that led

to Michigan's lone touchdown of the game.

Although Johnson being ruled out was expected, the Wolverines had a bit of an injury surprise before kickoff when star tight end Colston Loveland landed on the injury report as an inactive for The Game due to an undisclosed injury he had suffered in the second half of the Wolverines' 50-6 rout of Northwestern on Nov. 23.

Michigan head coach Sherrone Moore previously expressed optimism that Loveland was going to be ready to play for The Game, saying that he was "trending in the right direction." But he was ultimately unable to go, which – at least before the game – appeared to be a major loss for an already limited Wolverines passing game.

The projected first-rounder was by far Michigan's leading receiver, recording 56 receptions for 582 yards and five touchdowns through 10 games.

Michigan struggled in the passing game against Ohio State without Loveland, with quarterback Davis Warren completing just nine of his 16 attempts for 62 yards and two interceptions. The Wolverines did not have a player record more than 20 yards receiving, with senior wideout Peyton O'Leary leading the team with just one catch for 18 yards.

Day Rues Michigan Losses

As difficult as the conclusion of the last three regular seasons was for Ohio State fans, no one felt the consequences of losing to Michigan in three straight seasons more than Day. In an interview with 10TV's "Game Time with Ryan Day" on Nov. 25, the head coach detailed the impact of the three losses felt by him and his family.

"We felt what it's like to not win this game, and it's bad. It's one of the worst things that's happened to me in my life, quite honestly," Day said. "Other than losing my father and a few other things, it's quite honestly, for my family, the worst thing that's happened. So we can never have that happen again, ever. And that's been the approach all season."

When Day was asked in his weekly press conference on Nov. 26 about what makes losses to Michigan so difficult to deal with, he compared the rivalry to war.

"Not to get into too much of it, it's just – this game is a war," Day said. "And anytime there's a war, there's consequences and casualties, and then there's the plunder and the rewards that

come with it. That's what it is. I just think that that's really what it comes down to. As we all say, and it happened in my press conference, the No. 1 job is to win this game. So that's the focus right now. I don't want to get too much into the past, because we're just focused on right now, and we've worked really hard to get to this point."

'Cuse Win A "Full-Circle" Moment For McCord

Just hours after the Buckeyes endured one of their worst losses in program history, the former OSU quarterback McCord led his new team to one of its best wins in recent memory.

As mentioned earlier, Syracuse added another upset win to what was a hectic rivalry week in college football after its defeat of Miami in the JMA Wireless Dome, a statement victory for the 9-3 Orange that was led by their new quarterback.

McCord, who entered Week 14 as the nation's leading passer at 3,946 yards, helped Syracuse overcome an early 21-0 deficit by completing 26 of his 36 pass attempts for 380 yards and three touchdowns in the win.

McCord's masterful performance only adds more salt in the wounds for Ohio State and Day coming off their loss to Michigan because the Buckeyes had to move on from the quarterback after he entered the transfer portal last December, leading them to nab Howard from Kansas State for the 2024 season.

When asked after the game if it "gave him any extra satisfaction" that he led Syracuse to a win over the top-10 Hurricanes the same day his former team dropped its fourth straight game to Michigan and scored just 10 points in doing so, McCord gave a short but deliberate statement.

"Everything comes full circle," he said as his Orange teammates laughed beside him at the podium.

McCord has made the most of his new opportunity this season, completing an impressive 367 of his 558 passes (65.8 percent) for an FBS-leading 4,326 passing yards and 29 touchdowns to 12 interceptions, numbers that eclipse the 3,170 passing yards and 24 scores (only six interceptions) he totaled as OSU's starting signal caller last season.

McCord's replacement at Ohio State, on the other hand, finished his regular season completing 227 of his 314 passes (72.3 percent) for

Continued On Page 6

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OHIO STATE INSIDER

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2,860 yards, 27 touchdowns and eight interceptions.

Downs A Finalist For Bednarik, Thorpe Awards

Ohio State sophomore safety Caleb Downs was the only player in the country to be named a finalist for both the Jim Thorpe Award, given to the nation's best defensive back, and the Bed-

narik Award, given to the nation's best defender, on Nov. 26.

Downs, who transferred to Ohio State from Alabama, has been one of the more efficient Buckeyes as the last line of defense often preventing lengthy touchdowns.

In 12 games with the Buckeyes, Downs' 62 tackles are the third most on the team, while his 6½ tackles for loss are tied for third most on the team with linebacker Sonny Styles. Downs also added an interception in the loss to Michigan, his first of the season.

Joining Downs on the list for the Thorpe Award are Texas cornerback Jahdae Barron and Georgia cornerback Malaki Starks.

The two other finalists for the Bednarik Award meanwhile, are Penn State defensive end Abdul Carter and Colorado cornerback Travis Hunter.

Despite making the All-SEC first team and being named the Shaun Alexander Freshman of the Year, Downs was not one of three finalists for either the Thorpe Award or the Bednarik Award last season.

Downs will find out if he's named the nation's

best defender, defensive back or both when the awards are announced on Dec. 12 during ESPN's "Home Depot College Football Awards" show.

Howard, Simon B1G Players Of The Week

Howard and Simon were recognized on Nov. 25 by the Big Ten for their impressive performances in a 38-15 win over Indiana.

The conference named Howard a co-Big Ten Offensive Player of the Week with Illinois receiver Pat Bryant, while Simon was the Big Ten Defensive Player of the Week.

Additionally, Ohio State named Henderson an Offensive Player of the Game along with Howard, while Simon took the Defensive Player of the Game honors, and Downs with his 79-yard punt return touchdown was the Special Teams Player of the Game, as announced on the team's twitter account on Nov. 24.

The Buckeyes managed only 316 total yards against Indiana, but this was partially due to the slow tempo of the game. Neither Howard nor Henderson had eye-popping numbers, but

both players were effective with the ball in their hands. Of 26 pass attempts, Howard completed 22 for 201 yards and two touchdowns. Howard didn't have a huge day running the football, as he finished the game with five carries for minus-1 yard, but he added a 1-yard touchdown in the last minute of the game on a QB sneak.

Howard's touchdown run wouldn't have happened without the selflessness of Henderson. On a game-long 39-yard run, the running back broke through the Indiana front seven with a clear path to the end zone ahead of him. Rather than scoring the touchdown, Henderson slid down at the 1-yard line to give the Buckeyes the option of running more time off the clock.

Henderson's run was Ohio State's longest play of the game and made him Ohio State's leading rusher in the game with 68 yards on nine carries and a touchdown.

Simon was an easy pick to be the team and conference's defensive player of the week. Simon came up with a career-high 2½ sacks – all of which were recorded in the first half – forced a strip-sack and also led the team with 10 total tackles.

From The Pages Of BSB

40 Years Ago — 1984

Ohio State linebacker Pepper Johnson had been to California before, but a trip to the Holiday Bowl in San Diego wasn't his idea of a great vacation.

"It wasn't that much of a thrill," Johnson said.

So it's understandable why the junior from Detroit was extremely happy about Ohio State's 21-6 win over the school from his own state (Michigan) on Nov. 17, which propelled the Buckeyes to the Rose Bowl.

"It's about time," Johnson said. "Now, I can go back home with my head high. It's not just the Rose Bowl. It's the Big Ten championship."

Two weeks earlier, the situation didn't look so bright, but on Nov. 10, the impossible became reality. Iowa lost to Michigan State and Wisconsin whipped Purdue while Ohio State was pounding Northwestern. Those three results made the Buckeyes the front-runner in the race for the Rose Bowl.

"It didn't look good, but I don't think of myself as a quitter," Johnson said. "I had the highest hopes for Ohio State University."

35 Years Ago — 1989

It was his ninth loss in 22 games as head football coach at Ohio State, yet his postgame demeanor was unlike that of the previous eight defeats.

While not accepting defeat, John Cooper seemed at peace with his team's effort against third-ranked Michigan.

Although the underdog Buckeyes dropped a 28-18 decision to the Wolverines on Nov. 25 and lost a chance for a piece of the Big Ten championship, Cooper had praise for his team.

"We played hard," the second-year OSU head coach said. "We gave it everything we had and made it a good, interesting game."

"I thought we had our chances to win, especially since we got some turnovers in the game. But let's give Michigan credit. We lost to a great football team today."

30 years ago — 1994

The Buckeyes jumped out to a 12-3 lead at halftime, but that advantage looked to be in jeopardy when the offense managed only 10 yards on three separate third-quarter possessions.

But the defense came to the rescue, helping the team carve out a 22-6 victory on Nov. 19, giving head coach John Cooper his first triumphant victory ride in seven tries while at OSU against Michigan.

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

Most of the players and coaches would not admit it, but the Michigan monkey on their backs had become somewhat of a two-ton gorilla.

"Every year I've heard the same thing: 'When are you going to beat Michigan? When are you going to beat Michigan?' Well, now I've got an answer to that question," said senior co-captain Marlon Kerner. "It was a long time coming, but that makes it just that much sweeter."

25 Years Ago — 1999

Cooper would have been happy — except for the fact that he was staring at a season of bitter disappointment.

Cooper met with the media just minutes after his Buckeyes ended their season with a 24-17 loss at Michigan Nov. 20.

As the old adage goes, Cooper damned his team with faint

praise: He was ecstatic over the way his team played in The Game — the result notwithstanding — but he lamented the fact that his team waited until the final game to show such intensity during a maddening 6-6 season.

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

20 Years Ago — 2004

"I didn't realize what the rivalry was about and is about until you get a 'W,' until you're in it, until you're in the fight," Ohio State quarterback Troy Smith said after Ohio State's 37-21 win over Michigan on Nov. 20. "My hat's off to Michigan, but today is Ohio State's day."

More accurately, it was Smith's day. As players and coaches alike made sure to note following the game, it was total team effort that put the Buckeyes in position for the upset. Freshman phenom Ted Ginn Jr. again changed the complexion of the game with an 82-yard punt return for a touchdown, the defense clicked in all facets to turn Michigan into a one-dimensional football team, and senior Mike Nugent was all that Buckeye fans had come to expect in his final game in the Horseshoe, hitting on all three of his field-goal attempts, including one from 48 yards.

But it was Smith who deflated the Michigan defense and put his opponent's offense behind the eight ball time and again, hitting receivers in stride when he had the opportunity and making plays with his feet when he didn't. The redshirt sophomore finished the day having completed 13 of 23 passes for 241 yards and two touchdowns and rushing for another 145 and a touchdown.

Smith's 386 yards of total offense were the third most in OSU's single-game history, behind quarterbacks named Art Schlichter (412 vs. Florida State in 1981) and Joe Germaine (388 vs. Penn State in 1997), and his total was the best ever in the long history of the Ohio State-Michigan rivalry.

15 Years Ago — 2009

How complete was Jim Tressel's mastery of Michigan?

At one point during Ohio State's 21-10 win against its archrival Nov. 21, one of Ohio State's student assistant coaches — the one in charge of transmitting the play call to the field by writing it on a white board — mistakenly sent in a call that didn't fit the Buckeyes' formation.

But rather than have the miscommunication blow up in his face, Tressel watched as the play — a counter run to the left after three receivers lined up right — turned into an easy 29-yard touchdown run by Brandon Saine that gave Ohio State a 14-3 second-quarter lead.

As one reporter in the Michigan Stadium press box said, even when something doesn't go according to plan for Tressel against Michigan, the ninth-year coach still comes out smelling like roses.

So it was appropriate that No. 9 Ohio State's Rose Bowl season ended the way it did — with a win in Ann Arbor that served as the cherry on top of the Buckeyes' 2009 regular season.

Along the way, Tressel improved to 8-1 and undefeated in his last six against Michigan, a stark reversal of predecessor Cooper's mark of 2-10-1.

10 Years Ago — 2014

After keeping the ball on an option play during Ohio State's 42-28 win over Michigan, quarterback J.T. Barrett found himself unable to elude Michigan defensive end Mario Ojemudia, who grabbed him and spun around him as the quarterback tried to pull free. That resulted in the defender rolling up on his right leg, fracturing Barrett's ankle in the process. Barrett rolled over on his back and was quickly

attended to by Ohio State trainers, one of whom immediately ran back to the sideline to call for more help. After only a short evaluation, the cart was called onto the field, and Barrett was fitted with an air cast and driven away.

Tight end Jeff Heuerman was one of the first to get to Barrett after the redshirt freshman was injured, and he noticed even before the quarterback that something was wrong.

"I heard him yell and I went over to help him up and when I went over I saw his ankle and it wasn't pretty and I just told him, 'Stay down, stay down,'" Heuerman said. "So as soon as I saw that I just told him to stay on the ground, and the medical staff got there immediately."

Barrett himself wasn't immediately aware of the severity of the situation.

"He was trying to get me to help him up and I was like, 'Dude, you can't get up,'" Heuerman said. "I heard him yell and I looked over at him and at first I just thought he got his bell rung. As soon as everyone got off of him I went over there and as soon as I saw his ankle, he didn't realize it at first, that's when I told him, 'You've got to stay down for a second.'"

Enter quarterback Cardale Jones. Jones guided the Buckeyes to one scoring drive, connecting on two of his three passing attempts for 7 yards and running twice for 18.

Five Years Ago — 2019

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

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

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

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

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

One Year Ago — 2023

Despite all of the noise — the talk of Michigan being a better team, the impact of the Wolverines' sign-stealing and 110,615 fans in The Big House — Ohio State ended up with all it could ask for as the game approached the final stage: a chance.

Trailing 30-24 with just one minute remaining and no timeouts, Ohio State had gains of 22 and 22 from quarterback Kyle McCord to wideouts Marvin Harrison Jr. and Julian Fleming, respectively, that got the Buckeyes down to Michigan's 37-yard line.

But that chance — to score, end a two game winning streak for Michigan and nullify the wrongs of the last two seasons — evaporated on the next play when McCord faced immediate pressure with the left side of the offensive line collapsing, airing a ball toward Harrison as he was hit that was intercepted by Michigan safety Rod Moore, ending the game with the 30-24 advantage for the Wolverines.

Don't Miss BSB's Coverage Of The Early Signing Period

This is the final weekly issue of Buckeye Sports Bulletin in our fall publishing schedule. The next print edition of BSB is scheduled to be mailed Dec. 17. A lot will be happening in the world of college sports between now and then. The football early signing period begins on Dec. 4. The transfer portal opens on Dec. 9, and Ohio State could be preparing for a CFP playoff game. There is no reason to miss any of the latest news between now and the next print BSB. The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff will be reporting on all the breaking news in real time at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB print subscribers. The staff will also provide the latest news on the men's and women's basketball teams, as well as the hockey teams, the OSU wrestlers and the other sports at Ohio State.

The discussion should also be hot and heavy on the BuckeyeSports.com Forum, where subscribers and staff members interact, following Ohio State's stunning loss to Michigan.

BuckeyeSports.com offers plenty of additional content not found in your paper. The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff reports on the breaking stories, plus posts additional features. This is also where you can find the latest recruiting news.

Along with daily posts, we offer reprints from the Buckeye Sports Bulletin archives as part of our popular Reprint Thursdays

We want to remind readers that the complete edition of each BSB is posted at BuckeyeSports.com immediately upon completion of the paper, making the site a must for the readers having continuing mail problems. This electronic service, while not a substitute for your print edition, is a stopgap as your paper winds its way through the postal system and is also free to subscribers.

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Despite all of the great plays made by his teammates in the convincing win, Downs' 79-yard return was the biggest of them all. With Ohio State up 14-7, Downs flashed his quickness and speed by navigating around Hoosiers to get to the end zone and give his team a 21-7 lead.

Downs' punt return touchdown was the Buckeyes' first since a 54-yard punt return touchdown by Jalin Marshall against the Hoosiers in a 42-27 win on Nov. 22, 2014, ending a streak that crossed the 10-year mark by one day.

Buckeyes Give Back For Thanksgiving

On Nov. 27, a group of Ohio State players continued the program's annual tradition of giving back to the community before Thanksgiving Day by helping pack meals for seniors and those with challenges inside the Columbus-based LifeCare Alliance building as part of Beat Michigan Week.

Working with LifeCare Alliance, an in-home health care agency that assists older adults or medically challenged residents, the Buckeyes helped pack Thanksgiving meals that were sent out to seniors and children in daycare throughout central Ohio.

According to LifeCare Alliance CEO Charles Gehring, the company sends over 6,000 meals to seniors and 1,000 meals to children in childcare per day.

Many of the Buckeyes who helped pack meals were freshmen, including safety Jaylen McClain, cornerback Miles Lockhart and quarterbacks Air Noland and Julian Sayin.

Those who were involved in the charity event said packing the meals served as an important reminder just days before The Game of the platform they have as high-profile student-athletes to give back to the community, whether they are winning or losing on Saturdays.

"It's good to give back," McClain said. "We have a big game this weekend. Put time to the side to make this happen for everybody."

"It's bigger than football," Sayin said. "It's awesome to give back and be a part of the community."

"GameDay" Gets Near-Record Viewers

The pregame anticipation for the Ohio State's top-five matchup with Indiana was especially palpable during ESPN's broadcast of "College GameDay" on Saturday. The broadcast was the fourth-most watched regular-season

show in the program's history. The three-hour show averaged 2.5 million viewers and peaked at 3.5 million viewers.

The show was capped by former Indiana head coach Lee Corso predicting Indiana to pull off the upset when he put on the Hoosiers' headgear. The guest picker for the Ohio State vs. Indiana game was former Buckeye quarterback from 2019-21 and Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Justin Fields. Fields picked the Buckeyes to win by 50 points.

"College GameDay" was also on site for two other Ohio State games this year, including Ohio State's 32-31 loss to Oregon and 20-13 win over Penn State, and could return for a Buckeye game if the team makes a run in the College Football Playoff.

Former OSU Coach Wilson Fired By Tulsa

Former Ohio State offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson (2017-22) was fired as the Tulsa head coach on Nov. 25. Wilson's firing came just one day after his Tulsa team lost 63-30 to South Florida. The blowout loss brought Wilson's record as head coach of the Golden Hurricane to 7-16 over his two seasons, including a 3-12 record in the AAC.

Giving up 40.1 points per game before Wilson's firing, the Golden Hurricane's defense ranked 132nd out of 133 teams.

Contrary to the struggles he had as the head coach at Tulsa, Wilson helped lead Ohio State to four straight Big Ten championships from 2017-2020 and playoff appearances in 2019, 2020 and 2022 in his stint under Meyer and Day.

Londot Selected In Pro Volleyball Draft

Ohio State star outside hitter Emily Londot was selected with the 10th overall pick in the Pro Volleyball Federation Draft on Nov. 25 by the Omaha Supernovas.

Londot, a Buckeye since 2020, was an All-Big Ten first-team inclusion in 2020, 2022 and 2023 and made the All-Big Ten second team in 2021.

Londot's 2,228 career kills and 2,535 career points both rank second in program history.

The Pro Volleyball Federation is only in its second year as a league but has quickly become the leading Professional Volleyball League in the United States. Londot probably couldn't have been picked a better team to be drafted to than the defending-champion Supernovas.

Despite finishing the season with a team-high 510 kills, Londot and the Buckeyes look unlikely to make the postseason after finishing the regular season with a 14-16 record.

Men's Soccer Advances To NCAA Quarterfinals

The Ohio State men's soccer team's magical 2024 run continued in dramatic fashion on Dec. 1 when in a scoreless bout against No. 16 Stanford in the round of 16, the Buckeyes won a 0-0 tie with a 4-2 finish on penalty kicks to make

their second appearance in school history in the quarterfinals of the NCAA tournament.

Ohio State, which previously won the regular season and Big Ten championship earlier this season, entered the NCAA tournament as the No. 1 overall seed.

Head coach Brian Maissonneuve's team advanced in nail-biting fashion 2-1 over Western Michigan before taking on Stanford.

It was a stressful scoreless 90 minutes of regulation for the Buckeyes, in which the two teams combined for 20 shots, 11 recorded by Stanford compared to nine for Ohio State.

Overtime and double overtime couldn't break the scoreless drought – although Ohio State managed four shots in the first overtime period – sending the contest into penalty kicks.

The Buckeyes finally had an advantage in the match, with a save from Max Trejo and a goal by midfielder Marko Borkovic. Stanford midfielder Zach Bohane couldn't convert his penalty, and Buckeye defender Thomas Gillej gave his team a commanding 2-0 lead.

Midfielder Parker Grinstead converted on the Buckeyes' third straight penalty, and despite back-to-back makes from Stanford, Ohio State needed one more penalty kick to be scored to advance.

With the match on the line, midfielder Anthony Samways ran up to the ball and launched it past the outstretched hand of the Stanford goalie and into the back of the net, as the rest of the team sprinted onto the field, celebrating their first round-of-16 win since 2007.

Ohio State will host No. 8 Wake Forest in the next round of the tournament on Dec. 7 at 5 p.m. with a spot in the semifinals on the line. The winner will match up against No. 12 SMU or No. 13 Marshall.



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Mistakes From Start To Finish Key Defeat

Continued From Page 1

things around, really ended up coming to a head today for some of those guys.

"We're very disappointed, and we never thought this would happen right here," he added later. "We were expecting to win this game then go play in the Big Ten Championship Game. Now neither of those things happen. We don't know what's going on now. This is just too soon to try to figure out what's next."

Mistakes On Mistakes

While Buckeye fans will point fingers at many different things to explain what exactly went wrong against the Wolverines, the loss ultimately falls on the team's several critical mistakes.

Much like in the 2023 iteration of The Game, those mistakes begin with Ohio State's quarterback throwing early-game interceptions. Last season, it was a first-quarter interception from former Buckeye Kyle McCord – who led Syracuse to a 42-38 upset win over No. 6 Miami (Fla.) on Nov. 30 to put more salt on the wounds for Ohio State – that gave Michigan the early momentum, putting the Wolverines at OSU's 7-yard line and setting up an eventual 7-0 lead that they would never relinquish.

This year it was Howard who swung the momentum in the Wolverines' favor at the beginning of the second quarter, when on third-and-9 from the OSU 4-yard line, he dropped back into the end zone and delivered an errant throw behind wide receiver Carnell Tate and into the waiting arms of Michigan defensive back Aamir Hall, who returned it 11 yards to the OSU 2-yard line.

Just like McCord's 2023 miscue, Howard's 2024 interception led to a rushing touchdown for the Wolverines that gave them a lead a few plays later, this time a 1-yarder from Kaleb Mullings that put Michigan up 7-3.

In another comparison to last year's contest, the early turnover would not be the only

time Howard put the ball into harm's way. The next came midway through the third quarter with the score knotted at 10.

Ohio State seemed poised to retake the lead when it began to have some success in the run game and methodically drove down the field in six plays to find itself on Michigan's 16-yard line, but instead of finding the end zone as it had done so many times this season, it did just the opposite. On third-and-7, Howard attempted a short pass in the flat to Emeka Egbuka but once again threw behind his receiver, this time landing in the arms of Makari Paige at the U-M 9-yard line.

Howard's interception did not end up in points for the Wolverines on the ensuing drive, but it negated a chance for the Buckeyes to put up any points on the scoreboard and take a lead. It was a costly mistake that the fifth-year Kansas State transfer – who spent most of his Nov. 26 press conference talking about the significance of The Game but had little to say after the loss on Nov. 30 – knew after the game he simply could not make it in that situation.

"Both of them were on me," Howard said of his two interceptions. "The first one, we were throwing out routes, reading eyes inside, and I have to keep it outside. I can't let them make that play. The second one, Emeka was running an option route. He went out and came back in, and I was just a little behind him on the throw."

The Buckeye blunders did not end with Howard. After making high-impact winning plays for three games in a row, Ohio State's special teams unit had by far its worst showing of the season in the most important game, a major shortcoming that was mostly brought on by the poor play of kicker Jayden Fielding.

Fielding had been seldom used by the touchdown-scoring Buckeyes this season, attempting just nine kicks and making eight – including a clutch 46-yarder on the road against Penn State on Nov. 1 – but against the Wolverines, he was called upon to produce in the clutch and was unsuccessful.

He did put a 29-yarder through the uprights early in the contest to put OSU up 3-0, but when the game tightened up, so did the junior, shanking close attempts of 38 yards with 7:28 in the second quarter and 34 yards with 1:58 left in the third to keep OSU off the board. Fielding's six points would have been the difference of the game, but instead, it only gave the Wolverines more belief that they could win and the Buckeye offense added pressure to find the end zone.

"Yeah, I'm not there right now, quite honestly. I'm still trying to digest everything that just happened," Day said after the game when asked about the confidence he still has in Fielding heading into a potential College Football Playoff game.

Even with all of the kicking and turnover woes – not to mention the team's meager 77 yards rushing on 26 attempts (3.0-yard average) – Ohio State was still in reach of salvaging a win late in the game, with the score knotted at 10 late in the fourth quarter.

But the final body blow for the Buckeyes came on perhaps the most egregious mistake of the afternoon, which occurred at the most inopportune time on Michigan's final drive of the game. Ohio State needed just one more stop to force a red-zone field goal and give the Buckeyes just under two minutes to tie the game or take the lead on offense, but instead, disaster struck.

As Michigan lined up for a third-and-2 from the OSU 9-yard line with just 1:54 left following a Buckeye timeout, Day bolted toward the sideline official in an effort to stop the game with his second timeout.

But it was too late.

Instead, Ohio State was flagged for a 4-yard penalty for having 12 men on the field, giving U-M a fresh set of downs and forcing Day to use each of his final two timeouts before Wolverine kicker Dominic Zvada drilled a game-winning 21-yard field goal with just 45 seconds left.

When asked about the illegal substitution penalty – which allowed the Wolverines to burn off another 1:10, precious time the

Buckeyes could have used during their unsuccessful four-play final drive – Day said it came down to a miscommunication between staff and players that left the team in a state of confused panic.

"There was miscommunication in terms of the grouping based on what they had in the game," he said. "(Michigan was) fast to run off the sideline, and we weren't given a ton of time to be able to match the personnel. So in that moment, as it was getting loud, there was miscommunication in terms of what was in the game.

"Because it was moving so fast, there was a little bit of panic going on. Typically when the group runs on the field, you get a little bit of time to make sure you make that substitution. And that time was very, very fast. So we had to quickly respond to that, and we didn't (do it) well enough, and we panicked and it cost us."

Regardless, the 4-yard penalty capped a disaster of an afternoon for Ohio State that occurred in large part due to its unforced errors, ones which Day said simply cannot happen if it wants to come away victorious in a heated rivalry game.

"The turnovers, the rushing yards, you miss opportunities like those two field goals, yeah it's going to cost you a game like this," he said. "Every yard matters, every point matters, and it didn't get done."

Mayhem At Block O

Ohio State's fourth straight loss to Michigan triggered many difficult emotions for those who had devoted all their time and effort to emerging as victors in The Game but fell short each time, and those feelings seemed to boil over and spill out onto the field right after the clock struck zeros.

Before they walked onto the field, the Buckeyes lined up arm-in-arm near the OSU student section to sing "Carmen Ohio," but the tradition was interrupted when a group of Wolverine players headed toward midfield with a blue Michigan flag in hand and planted it inside the Buckeyes' "Block O."

The gesture did not sit well with the remaining Ohio State fans in the building – who rained loud boos on the Wolverines – and that seemed to catch the attention of the Buckeyes.

Despite "Carmen Ohio" still playing, several Ohio State players – sophomore cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr., redshirt sophomore Jelani Thurman and Sawyer leading the charge – bolted toward midfield to confront the Wolverines, leading to an all-out melee between the two hated rivals that lasted roughly five minutes.

The intense brawl – which also included Sawyer escalating the situation by ripping the flag away from junior Wolverines edge rusher Derrick Moore – had several punches being thrown by members of both teams and ended with police deploying pepper spray and forming a human barrier to separate the two rivals.

According to ESPN, players from both sides were left bloodied and one police officer was injured and transported for medical attention.

When asked about the brawl after the game, Day declined to provide an update on the health of some of his players who were

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involved but did say that the incident was sparked by his players wanting to defend their home turf.

"I don't know all the details of it but I know that (Michigan is) looking to plant a flag on our field and our guys weren't going to let that happen. I'll find out exactly what happened, but this is our field. Certainly, we're embarrassed at the fact we lost the game, but there's some prideful guys on our team that just weren't going to let that happen."

Simon and Howard seemed to want to move past the incident when asked to offer their own perspectives in the postgame.

"Nope," Howard said when asked if he had any thoughts on the brawl.

"We want to stay together as a team," Simon added. "I don't want to focus on anything about that. I just want to keep the focus on having to regroup. We know there's more season left for us, so just stay focused."

What's Next?

Amid the unpredictable series of events that unfolded at Ohio Stadium both during and after the game on Nov. 30, the Buckeyes still likely find themselves in reach of a bid to the new 12-team College Football Playoff, albeit the bid no longer being a top-four seed and a bye.

That bye will now go to the winner of the Big Ten Championship Game between No. 1 Oregon and No. 4 Penn State, who will square off on Dec. 7 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis at 8 p.m.

With Ohio State falling to the Wolverines and failing to reach the conference championship game for the fourth consecutive season, the Buckeyes now have the consolation prize of potentially earning a top-eight seed in the bracket and hosting a CFP game for the first time in program history.

Judging from the last CFP rankings released on Nov. 26, Ohio State could very well welcome a college football powerhouse to Ohio Stadium on Dec. 20 or Dec. 21, with Notre Dame, Georgia and Tennessee occupying the 7-9 seeds, respectively, and each coming away with victories in Week 14.

A potential marquee first-round CFP game at Ohio Stadium won't do much to

appease the average frustrated Ohio State, but those within the program see a potential playoff game as another opportunity to right the wrongs from the end of this season and string together a push for an elusive national championship.

"It's hard man. I don't really have much right now, but I do know we're a two-loss team and we're going to make the playoffs," Howard said early in his press conference. "We're going to make a run, but this one hurts."

"The bottom line is, we lost and it hurts," Howard said. "I can't say it enough, I'm sorry to Buckeye Nation, but listen, we still have things ahead of us, and we can still run the table and win a national championship. I think at the end of the day, that's what we have to focus on, and that has to keep us going. Because this one hurts like hell. I just feel for those guys that came back, I feel for Coach Day, everything they poured into this, and at the end of the day, we still have stuff in front of us. So we'll regroup and go from there tomorrow."

Regardless of a potential run at their first national title since 2014, a fourth straight loss to a heavy underdog Michigan team is going to sting for a while, especially for those Buckeyes who declined to enter the NFL draft to return to OSU and finish their careers with a pair of gold pants.

But a fourth straight defeat in The Game could also be a career-altering result for Day and his staff, who have devoted all their time and effort to emerging victorious against the rivals, all to come up short again.

Day declined to offer a response on his Buckeye future when asked about it after the game, but he did say that there is a long road ahead for him before he can get back on his feet.

"Everybody wants to win this game in the worst way, and nobody wants to win it more than we do," Day said. "It's our No. 1 goal every year. When you don't do that, there's disappointment and frustration. I don't blame anybody for being upset. I'm upset more than anybody, and those players are too and the coaches and everybody that goes at it. So that's what we're getting ourselves into here."



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OSU Run Game Stuck In Mud Vs. Wolverines

Despite several reiterations from head coach Ryan Day regarding the importance of stopping the run and running the ball in the week leading up to The Game and throughout the season, the Buckeyes weren't the more physical team in their 13-10 loss to Michigan on Nov. 30.

GAME NOTEBOOK Bobby Gorbett

Ohio State was outgained on the ground for the fourth year in a row against the Wolverines, this year totaling just 77 yards to Michigan's 172, and for the 23rd consecutive year dating back to 2001, the team with the most rushing yards won The Game.

The Buckeye coaching staff won't make excuses, but the team has dealt with an uncommon run of injuries along the offensive line, which included season-enders suffered by offensive tackle Josh Simmons and center Seth McLaughlin.

Against one of the best defensive lines in the country led by defensive tackles Mason Graham and Kenneth Grant, the Buckeye injuries finally seemed to catch up with them.

With a combined 22 carries for 67 yards, neither of Ohio State's All-America caliber running backs found much of a rhythm. Quinshon Judkins was the team's leading rusher with 46 yards on 12 carries (3.8 average), and almost all of his yardage was gained on three carries that went for a combined 42 yards.

TreVeyon Henderson, meanwhile, was even less successful than his backfield mate, totaling just 21 yards on 10 carries (2.1 average) with a long of just 5 yards.

Even quarterback Will Howard, who has had success all season rushing the ball, didn't have the type of success on the ground that he has become accustomed to. He gained only 10



SONNY BROCKWAY

RUNNING ON EMPTY — The lack of a quality rushing attack was one of many problems that led to the Buckeyes' downfall in the 13-10 loss to Michigan on Nov. 30. Quinshon Judkins (1) led the team with just 46 yards on 12 carries as OSU gained only 77 yards on 3.0 yards per attempt.

yards on four carries and fell just short of the line to gain on a crucial third-down play in the fourth quarter.

With the game still tied at 10 and only 7:09 to go in the fourth quarter, the Buckeyes faced a key third-and-5 from their own 17. Howard did well to brush off contact from Michigan defensive end Cameron Brandt on the play, but he couldn't get past two more Wolverine defenders to pick up the conversion and fell a yard short of the marker. The Buckeyes were forced to punt before giving up the game-winning field goal on the Wolverines' next drive.

After the game, Day outlined the running game as one of the biggest differences in the

game.

"I think we struggled to run the ball in this game," Day said. "We've talked about this many times we have to run the ball, especially in this game. It was a little windy out, and in order to win The Game, you have to be able to run it. We weren't able to do that. We tried a couple different schemes but couldn't quite get into a rhythm on that. And that ultimately, along with the turnovers and the missed field goals, was the difference in the game."

Special Teams Miscues Difference In The Game

After two blocked punts and a punt-return touchdown in their previous three games, the Buckeyes' 2024 special teams roller coaster picked the worst time to regress against Michigan. The lopsided mismatch between the Wolverines' special teams unit and that of the Buckeyes accounted for the difference in the tightly contested low-scoring matchup.

A misplayed ball and subsequent poor return to Michigan's own 11-yard line by returner Jordan Marshall on the game's very first play was not at all a sign of things to come.

Instead, junior kicker Jayden Fielding started the Buckeyes' special teams slip-ups in the second quarter with a 38-yard missed field goal. As much as misses happen, Fielding's inaccuracy seemed to open the floodgates for poor plays made by the unit throughout the quarter.

The Wolverines were forced to punt on their ensuing possession, and sophomore safety Caleb Downs made a poor decision in letting Michigan punter Tommy Doman's boot bounce 68 yards all the way down to Ohio State's 7-yard line.

Ohio State punter Joe McGuire couldn't replicate Doman's success four plays later. Kicking into the wind after a three-and-out, his punt went only 31 yards to give the Wolverines

the ball at Ohio State's 39-yard line.

Another special teams miscue by Henderson — who didn't receive Doman's kickoff on the fly and fell on top of the ball right before Wolverine defenders arrived — forced the Buckeyes to start a drive in poor field position at their own 6-yard line to open the second half.

McGuire slightly redeemed himself later that quarter with a 36-yard punt to pin the Wolverines at the 2-yard line, but Fielding would have one more game-changing miss later in that period. From just 34 yards out, Fielding hit a line-driving hook that sailed left of the goalposts, preventing the Buckeyes from tacking on three points they desperately needed.

On the other end, outside of the opening-play mistake by Marshall, the Wolverines' special teams unit had a sensational performance. Doman had a strong outing in his own right — averaging 47.3 yards on his three punts — but Michigan kicker Dominic Zvada's clutch field goals will probably be the most memorable special teams moments of the game. With the help of the wind, Zvada drilled a 54-yarder in the second quarter to give Michigan a 10-3 lead with time winding down in the first half.

Zvada's next and last field goal wasn't nearly as impressive, but given the situation, it was still a significant accomplishment. With 48 seconds to go and the game tied at 10, Zvada proved more reliable than Fielding in the short range with a chip-shot, game-winning 21-yard field goal.

Defense Not Great Enough To Carry Offense

Unlike its other loss to Oregon on Oct. 12, Ohio State's defense was the only thing keeping the team in the game. Despite a mistake-riddled first half in which three straight Buckeye drives ended with an interception, a missed field goal and a three-and-out, the score at halftime was 10-10.

Jim Knowles' Silver Bullets appeared at the time to set the tone during the second drive of the game. With their backs against the wall on fourth-and-1 at OSU's 3-yard-line, Downs and defensive tackle Tyleik Williams combined to stop Michigan running back Kalel Mullings' progress right before the line to gain, turning the Wolverines over on downs.

Before Downs and the rest of the Buckeyes could finish celebrating their goal-line stand, though, they were thrown right back onto the field after a Howard interception.

Starting with the ball at the 2-yard line, the Wolverines were able to punch the ball into the end zone with a 1-yard run. That six-play sequence which saw the Wolverines turn the ball over on downs, get it back with an interception and ultimately score one of only two touchdowns in the game didn't just give the Wolverines legitimate footing to win the game, but it was emblematic of the defense's entire performance.

All day the Buckeyes were solid against Michigan's ground-and-pound physical approach but weren't great enough to carry their ailing offense.

That theme continued on Michigan's next scoring drive later that quarter. Because the Wolverines started their late-second quarter drive at the Buckeye 39-yard line, a three-and-out forced by Knowles' unit wasn't good enough to prevent the Wolverines from scor-



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Game Analysis

What Worked Well

In losses, it's always tough to say that something worked well, but in this game, it's tougher than it has been in a long time after being such a big favorite in the rivalry game in which the Buckeyes were supposed to re-establish their dominance over Michigan. One thing that worked like it was supposed to was Ohio State's passing defense, holding Davis Warren to just 62 yards through the air on 9-of-16 passing while bringing in two interceptions. Ultimately those interceptions didn't mean anything since the Buckeyes weren't able to make anything out of the ensuing offensive drives, but the defense did – multiple times – put the offense in position to make a run.

The defense overall in the first half was much better than the scoreboard showed. After a fourth-down stop on a drive in which OSU gave up 72 yards, Jim Knowles' unit completely shut down Michigan for two full quarters, or at least that's what some of the numbers would show. Over the next six drives, the Buckeyes gave up just 23 yards to the Wolverines. But that is the time frame in which Michigan scored 10 of its 13 points in the game due to mistakes made by the offense and special teams. For most of the game up until the fourth quarter, the defense was making stops, and for the entire game, Warren had trouble getting anything going in the passing game. That might have been expected from the 127th passing offense in the country that was averaging just 140.1 yards per game coming into the contest, but the Buckeyes were still able to do their job defending the air game.

What Didn't Work

So many things could be chosen for this section, but more than anything what stands out is the field-goal kicking by Jayden Fielding, missing two kicks that – if you look only at the final score – would have been enough to win the game for Ohio State. The lack of trust that Ohio State has had in Fielding throughout this season has been obvious at times, with

the offense going for it on fourth-and-long in multiple different scenarios throughout the year when it seemed to be in field-goal range. At the time that could have been taken as an extreme confidence in the offense and its ability to convert in those situations – which many times it was – but after this game and missed 38- and 34-yarders from Fielding, it's tough not to look back on those differently. In 12 games this season, he was just 9 of 12, missing the two kicks against Michigan from inside 40 yards and missing one against Nebraska, sending a 42-yarder extremely wide right in that close game in which the Buckeyes were almost upset.

The difference Fielding made was reflected on the other sideline, with Michigan kicker Dominic Zvada making two very clutch kicks to add to the Wolverines' touchdown for their 13-point total. He made a 54-yarder late in the second quarter to take a 10-3 lead and the game-winner with 45 seconds remaining from 21 yards out.

Play Of The Game

In a close game like this one, so many plays could end up being the deciding factor. The Buckeyes had countless opportunities that they weren't able to take advantage of, like the late Jack Sawyer interception, but ultimately didn't do enough to come through. The play that did end up deciding the game was on Michigan's final drive – not including the kneel-down that finished the game – when OSU had the Wolverines on the Buckeye side of the field for a third-and-6. Kaleb Mullings rushed up the middle only to be stuffed at the line for no gain, but two Buckeye tacklers – Ty Hamilton and Sawyer – were unable to bring him down, and he broke free for a 27-yard gain down the right sideline, allowing Michigan to continue its drive that chewed 5:28 off the clock and ended in the game-winning field goal.

— Greg Wilson

ing on a 54-yard field goal from Zvada.

Michigan went only 5 combined yards on its two first-half scoring drives, but the ideal field position allowed the Wolverines to put 10 points on the board.

The Buckeyes' second-half defensive performance looked better on paper considering the unit conceded only three points, but it was increasingly agonizing for the Buckeye faithful.

Without any help from their offense – which managed no points despite ending each of their three third-quarter drives in Michigan territory – the defense did all it could that period by forcing a three-and-out and an interception of Michigan quarterback Davis Warren.

In the fourth quarter, though, the Buckeyes began to bend once again.

During the first part of the Wolverines' penultimate drive, which started at the end of the third quarter and lasted until the 7:48 mark in the fourth quarter, Ohio State's defense was stingy against the run.

The third-down defense, though, was not as effective. Michigan converted three straight third downs of 6 yards or more to get into Ohio State territory. On a drive that started at their own 20-yard line, the Wolverines were closing in on a go-ahead touchdown on Ohio State's 3-yard line before defensive end Jack Sawyer delivered with a heroic goal-line interception.

Sawyer's big play was not cashed in for what could have been a go-ahead game-deciding touchdown drive, instead ending in a three-and-out that gave Michigan the ball right back at its 40-yard line.

After the game, Day reflected on how the offense's struggles affected the defense.

"I thought the defense kept fighting their tails off, kept competing," Day said. "When you're not getting as much momentum on offense, it can kind of wear down your defense a little bit. I think that's probably – more than anything – what happened. But I thought they continued to fight the entire game."

With very little time to rest before their next drive, the Buckeyes' rushing defense finally started to show cracks.

Just creeping into OSU territory at the 44, Michigan dialed up a run call on third-and-6. Without a rushing lane for Mullings to run through, it seemed as if the Buckeyes had stopped the play dead in its tracks, but the Michigan running back wiggled out of the grasp of defensive tackle Ty Hamilton and picked up 27 yards to get to Ohio State's 17-yard line.

After a crushing illegal substitution penalty, the Buckeyes finally forced the Wolverines to take three points, leaving the offense with 45 seconds and one last chance to score points, only for their last hope to fizzle out in the form of a four-and-out 1-yard drive.

Ohio State ended the game with only 234 total yards allowed, a number that is actually below its season average of 241.1 average yards allowed per game. At first glance, the Wolverines' 172 rushing yards seems like a lot, but they used 41 carries to reach that threshold for a 4.1-yard average.

Despite all of the mistakes made by the offense and admirable defensive moments, fifth-year linebacker Cody Simon still blames his own unit for the defeat.

"We just didn't get stops when we needed to," he said after the game. "We need to be prepared to win games on defense. We didn't get the stops when we needed to get the stops."

Howard Cleared Out Of Concussion Protocol

Although he didn't say as much after the game, Howard had one of his worst games as a Buckeye against the Wolverines. The former K-State transfer had a season-low 57.6 percent completion percentage, completing 19 of 33 passes for only 175 yards. Worst of all, Howard committed major mistakes, throwing costly interceptions in the second and third

quarter to either keep points off the board for Ohio State or put Michigan in great field position of its own to score.

In the middle of Howard's poor performance – and potentially one of the reasons for his struggles – was a hard hit he sustained on a third-and-3 run early in the second quarter. After keeping the ball on a read option play, Howard ran outside the tackle box before being grabbed from behind by Michigan junior linebacker Ernest Hausmann and hit hard by graduate senior safety Makari Paige short of the first-down marker.

Howard was slow to get up after the play and ultimately had to be helped off the field by trainers. He missed the Buckeyes' next fourth-and-1 play, a 10-yard run by Judkins that had Devin Brown handing him the ball, while being examined in the medical tent. Judkins' run was followed by a Michigan timeout, and during the stoppage of play and to the immense excitement of the 106,005 Ohio State fans in attendance, Howard sprinted out of the tent before heading back into the Buckeye huddle.

Howard's outburst of emotions was followed by a couple of losses on runs from Judkins and an incomplete pass, which prompted a field-goal attempt from Fielding that hooked wide right.

Howard was fairly average following his visit to the medical tent, completing just 13 of his 25 passes for 114 yards and a touchdown to one interception. After the game, Day said he had no reason to believe Howard's injury had any effect on his play.

"I just go based off of what our doctors say," Day said. "He came out for a second, and then they said he was available and that he was OK to go back in the game. I checked with him, and he said he was in good shape. I didn't recognize anything (that was wrong), just in terms of the interaction that led to anything other than for him to go play."

Several Bucks Involved in Brawl

Ohio State's three-point rivalry loss didn't come without some major animosity after the game. During an incident stemming from Michigan players celebrating the victory at midfield by planting a flag at the Ohio State Block "O" logo, multiple Buckeyes fought with Wolverines.

Sophomore cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. escalated the incident early on, engaging in a bit of a shoving match with a few Wolverine defenders.

Sawyer was in on the action later, when a flag came back toward midfield, leading him to rip the flag out of the hands of Michigan junior defensive end Derrick Moore. Davison Igbinosun followed Sawyer's lead later on and grabbed the flag.

Freshman cornerback Miles Lockhart also appeared to get involved in ripping the flag later on and seemed to push an apparent Michigan staffer attempting to reclaim the flag. Junior tight end Bennett Christian also appeared to shove that same Wolverines staff member.

Redshirt junior cornerback Lorenzo Styles Jr. was one of the first on the scene to defend the Buckeyes' logo but didn't appear to be much of an instigator of the violence, but rather more like a victim of it, as he was grabbed, pushed, thrown to the ground and potentially swung at.

Plenty of other Buckeyes were also involved in other pushing and shoving, and it's uncertain if any players involved in the incident will face punishment.

At least for the Buckeyes, a suspension of any of their players – which would be issued by the NCAA only after the Big Ten imposed fines – would mean missing out on a potential College Football Playoff first-round game held on either Dec. 20 or 21.

Michigan Kicks Buckeyes To Curb Again

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

This wasn't supposed to happen, but shockingly, stunningly and inconceivably, Ohio State did it again.

The heavily favored Buckeyes, who were supposed to name their score in the quest to end a three-game losing streak to a subpar Michigan team, instead are faced with the unanswerable question of what is next with the College Football Playoff ahead and their hearts broken.

Dominic Zvada kicked a 21-yard field goal with 45 seconds left when unranked Michigan upended the No. 2 Buckeyes 13-10 in front of a crowd of 106,005 in Ohio Stadium on Nov. 30.

The loss prevented the Buckeyes (10-2, 7-2 Big Ten) from playing Oregon in the Big Ten Championship Game on Dec. 7.

The Wolverines (7-5, 5-4), nearly three-touchdown underdogs, will go bowling somewhere a year after winning the national title by taking advantage of the mistake-prone Buckeyes.

Will Howard, who left the game briefly in the second quarter to be checked for a concussion, threw two interceptions, one in the red zone, and Jayden Fielding missed two makeable field goals for the Buckeyes.

Howard was 19 of 33 for 175 yards with his one touchdown going to Jeremiah Smith late in the second quarter for the 10-10 half-time score.

Nervous Energy

Michigan started from the 11 after Jordan Marshall fumbled the kickoff at the goal line but picked it up and got some breathing room. On third-and-5, Davis Warren threw 14 yards to Tyler Morris for a first down at the 30, but three unsuccessful plays later, Tommy Doman's 33-yard punt landed at the OSU 31.

The first two snaps for the Buckeyes totaled 17 yards on passes to Carnell Tate. Later, needing 2 yards on third down, Tate made a catch for 13 to the U-M 31.

On the next play, Howard went to the end zone for Smith, but Quinten Johnson was called for pass interference for a 15-yard penalty to the 16.

TreVeyon Henderson had two carries for 5 yards combined, and a pass to Emeka Egbuka was incomplete before Fielding made a 29-yard field goal for a 3-0 lead at 6:14.

U-M faced a third-and-3 from its 44 when backup quarterback Alex Orji took the snap, faked a handoff and ran for 29 yards to the 27. Kalel Mullings gained 18 yards on three straight runs. On third down from the 9, Fredrick Moore's catch for 6 yards set up a fourth-and-1 from the 3 to end the quarter.

Mullings was then stopped for no gain by Caleb Downs and Tyleik Williams and the Buckeyes took over at the 3, but Quinshon Judkins ran for nothing, Howard gained a yard then was intercepted by Aamir Hall at the 13 and he returned it to the 2.

Mullings rushed for a yard then followed with a 1-yard TD and a 7-3 lead at the 12:37 mark.

After a touchback, Judkins ran for 15, and Egbuka made a reception for 18 to the U-M 42. Smith grabbed a pass for 5 yards, a



SONNY BROCKWAY

NO, YOU DON'T — Michigan running back Kalel Mullings on fourth-and-goal from the 3 was stopped by Caleb Downs (2) and Tyleik Williams early in the second quarter of the Wolverines' 13-10 victory on Nov. 30.

skirmish broke out along the U-M sideline, and offsetting unsportsmanlike conduct penalties were assessed.

Judkins ran for 2, and on third-and-3 from the 35, Howard kept the ball and gained 2 before defensive back Makari Paige leveled him with a shoulder hit in the head area.

He was down for several minutes and replaced by Devin Brown, who gave the ball to Judkins for a 10-yard gain to the 23 on fourth down.

Following a Michigan timeout, Howard returned and Judkins lost a yard, but Michigan was offside on the next play to set up second down on the 19.

Judkins again lost a yard against the stout defense, Howard overthrew Tate on third down, and Fielding missed a 38-yard field goal to give Michigan more momentum.

However, the defense forced a three-and-out only to have Dorman blast a 68-yard punt with a roll to the 7.

The Buckeyes had to quickly punt. Henderson ran for 2 and a 1-yard loss with an incompleteness in between, and Joe McGuire scuffed a 31-yard punt to the 39, a net gain of 36 yards for U-M on the punt exchange.

Michigan gained 3 yards on three plays to set up a 54-yard field goal by Zvada that barely cleared the upright to make it 10-3 with 2:15 left in the half. He is 7 for 7 beyond 50 yards this season.

Ohio State tied it 10-10 with 30 seconds left in the half on a Smith 10-yard TD catch to cap a nine-play, 75-yard, 1:45 drive. When the Buckeyes got the ball back, Egbuka had an 18-yard catch to the OSU 49 on third down.

After an incompleteness, Smith had a catch

for 9, and Tate's two catches totaled 15 yards to the 27. Henderson rushed for only 2 before Smith for the second time drew a pass-interference call in the end zone, this time by Jyaire Hill.

With the ball at the 10, Howard found Smith in the right corner.

After the kickoff, Mullings ran for 6 to end the half.

Ohio State led in total yards with 155 (119 passing, 36 rushing) to 113 (31 passing, 82 rushing) and in first downs, 11-4.

Howard was 12 of 18 for 119 yards with Tate making five catches for 45 yards.

Misery With An M

The second half started ominously for the Buckeyes when Henderson fielded the kickoff for no gain at the 6.

After two runs gained 4, Egbuka made a first down at the 19 after a 9-yard catch. Tate's catch on the left flank added 13 yards.

On third-and-7 from the 35, Howard went to his outlet, Henderson. He caught the ball at the 32 and raced to the U-M 41 for a 24-yard gain.

Howard threw behind an open Egbuka at the 25 on third-and-7 from the 38, and McGuire's 36-yard punt was downed at the 2.

Two runs by Mullings got 4 yards. After an incompleteness, Downs had a fair catch at the U-M 47 after a 41-yard punt.

Judkins went for 17, 3 and 2 to the 25. On third down needing 5, Egbuka made a nice catch at the left boundary for 6 to the 19. Henderson on the next play went up the middle for 5, but Judkins lost 2 for a third-and-7 from the 16. Howard was picked off again with Paige doing the honors at the 9 with no return to deaden the crowd.

But three plays later, Downs made an interception at the 16 on a third-down play. Judkins had a run for zero, and a pass to Gee Scott Jr. netted nothing as did another futile run by Henderson before Fielding missed to the left on a 34-yard try.

U-M then converted a third-and-6 from the 24 on a 7-yard catch by Marlin Klein, and Orji ran for 2 yards to end the scoreless third quarter.

Klein made another third-down catch for 6 yards for a first at the Michigan 41 by a yard. On third needing 8, Peyton O'Leary made a diving catch for 18 yards to the OSU 39.

Warren took off for 11 yards to the 28. On a trick play, wide receiver Kendrick Bell threw to Tyler Morris at the goal line, and Denzel Burke was called for pass interference to place the ball on the 13.

Mullings ran for 9 yards on two carries, and on third down, Mullings got the necessary yard for a new set of downs from the 3.

On the next play, Jack Sawyer intercepted Warren at the goal line and made a return of 12 yards with 7:48 left in the fourth quarter.

Howard had a third-down scramble of 4 yards but was tackled at the 21, a yard short of moving the chains, and Michigan got the ball at its 40 with 6:13 left after a 38-yard punt and 2-yard return by Morris.

Mullings went for 8, 4, minus-2 and 6. Then on third-and-6 from the 44, he was stopped at the line but broke free for a 27-yard gain to the 17 that will go down in Michigan lore.

Marshall relieved him and gained 3 to the 14 at the 2:00 timeout. Mullings ran for 5, and OSU took a timeout. The Buckeyes had an illegal substitution, moving the ball to the 4 and more importantly a first down. Mullings lost 1, gained 2 and rushed for 1 as the Buckeyes exhausted their timeouts.

Ohio State then took a 10-second runoff for taking a helmet off, and the 40-second play clock proceeded to run down to 48 seconds before a U-M timeout to set up the winning kick.

The Buckeyes started from their 25, and Howard went incompleteness, a 1-yard pass to Henderson, incompleteness, incompleteness to turn the ball over with 23 seconds left.

After an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty on Michigan moved the ball back to the 41, Warren took a victory knee for a 1-yard loss to complete the upset.

A brawl broke out after the game when Michigan tried to plant its flag at midfield.

Notes

The kickoff temperature was 27 degrees to rank as the fifth-coldest temperature for a game in Columbus behind the 1950 "Snow Bowl" vs. Michigan (10 degrees per published reports), 2014 vs. Minnesota (15), 1964 vs. Michigan (20) and 1969 vs. Purdue (23). ... OSU had 252 yards (175 passing, 77 rushing). Michigan gained 234 (62 passing, 172 rushing). ... Judkins had 46 yards on 12 carries and Henderson 21 on 10. The Buckeyes averaged 3.0 yards per carry. ... Tate made six catches for 58 yards and Smith five for 35. ... Mullings gained 116 yards on 32 carries. ... Warren was 9 of 16 for 62 yards and the two picks.

BSB Quotebook: Michigan 13, Ohio State 10

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on the brawl that took place after the game and the Wolverines planting their flag: "I talked to the team after the game, and without knowing all of the details, there's some prideful guys on our team who aren't just going to sit back and watch that happen."

Michigan head coach Sherrone Moore on his players trying to plant a Michigan flag at midfield in the middle of the Ohio State Block "O" logo: "It's a heated rivalry. It's one that we all talk about. They talk about it; we talk about it. It's in my office. I walk in and the first thing I see is Ohio State. What are we doing to beat Ohio State today? It's something you think about 365 (days a year). We're excited we won the game, and I'm proud of our guys. It can't happen. Rivalry games get heated, especially this one. It's the biggest one in the country. We have to handle it better."

Michigan senior defensive end Josaiah Stewart on the fight that broke out at midfield after the game after the Wolverines planted the flag: "It all happened so fast. We were planting the flag, and the next thing you know, everybody was getting rushed. A fight, brawl, a lot of people – they had their whole team there, so there was a lot of them, and the next thing you know we were getting pepper-sprayed."

Michigan quarterback Davis Warren on his team planting the flag: "We're going to win in your house and we're going to plant the flag. You should have done something about it."

Michigan graduate running back Kaleb Mullings on everything that took place after the game: "For such a great game, you hate to see stuff like that after the game. That's

just bad for the sport, bad for college football. But at the end of the day, some people have to – they have to learn how to lose, man. You can't be fighting and stuff just because you lost a game. We had 60 minutes, four quarters to do all that fighting. And now they want to talk and fight. That's wrong. That's just bad for the game. Classless, in my opinion. People have to be better."

Moore on how he thought his team performed: "I think our defense played outstanding. They held a high-powered offense to 10 points. Seventy-seven rushing yards. This game has been won the last (23) years in the rushing battle. We had 172, they had 77. That's usually the story of the game. Our guys played great, especially the D-line. The O-line played great when they needed to. They got some good push, and we kind of hammered them. The wind was a factor going towards the locker room and away from the locker room. You couldn't throw as much and be effective in throw games. You definitely have to have a good run plan."

Michigan graduate cornerback Makari Paige on his interception: "We were in man coverage, two-high, and I saw (Emeka Egbuka) go on an out route. I had outside leverage already, though. The quarterback threw it, and I just jumped it."

Warren on the emotions he was feeling after the game: "It's hard to really put into words how much it means to this group. We talk about it 365 days a year and talked about it since I got here. Coach (Jim) Harbaugh started that. Coach Moore has kept it going. This game means everything to us. Things haven't gone exactly the way I've wanted them to over the course of the year, but I'm so proud of this group. They really stepped up and played incredible foot-

ball. I don't have the words to describe how proud I am of all of them."

Moore on his first win against Ohio State as the full-time Michigan head coach: "It means everything. But it really is all about the players. We talked about it all week. It's going to start up front, and the trenches win the game. It's not really about the scheme, it's not really about technique. It's really about the will and the will to want to put your man in the backfield or across the line of scrimmage."

Moore on how Michigan has been able to beat Ohio State four straight times: "Just our mindset of how we attack it. We started in 2021 with Coach (Jim) Harbaugh putting it all over the building. It's a constant thought process. How we practice, what we do, when we practice, thinking about this game, how we build our team, what we do. It will continue to be that way. We're going to continue to build this team, the foundation of who we are, this culture around winning this game, and that's what it's got to be about."

Ohio State fifth-year linebacker Cody Simon on the mood of the locker room following the loss: "I can't really speak for everybody else but I feel like I let all of Buckeye Nation down. Maybe there was more we could have done, I don't know, but we just could have done more. I let you guys down. I'm sorry."

Simon on where the team goes from here and how they can regroup moving forward in a potential College Football Playoff game: "I'm not really sure right now. It's frustrating for all the seniors, all the older guys. We're just going to have to lick our wounds and regroup but I don't think anything has hurt more than this."

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Media Assess OSU's Stunning Loss To U-M

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Behind a poor offensive effort led by quarterback Will Howard and a sluggish rushing attack, Ohio State lost again to Michigan, this time as a nearly three-touchdown favorite. The Buckeyes' 13-10 loss to the Wolverines was their fourth straight loss to their archrival, Michigan's longest winning streak in The Game since 1988-91.

The major upset took the Buckeyes out of Big Ten championship contention and instead sent Penn State in their place to face off against Oregon. It will force them to play an extra do-or-die College Football Playoff game and send seniors such as Emeka Egbuka, JT Tuimoloau, Jack Sawyer and many others to graduation without a pair of gold pants.

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day is now 1-4 against Michigan following the loss, and his teams haven't made a Big Ten Championship Game appearance since the 2020 season.

Here are some reactions from the media across the country about Ohio State's loss in Columbus:

"The Buckeyes entered Saturday 10-1 and ranked No. 2 in the nation. They were neck-and-neck with Georgia as preseason favorites to win the national championship. It still could happen, but after watching what went down

in the Horseshoe, I'm not sure they even win their first playoff game – yes, they're making the playoff – on Dec. 20th or 21st, likely at home.

"Imagine if that were to happen. Return most of your starters, spend a mint on NIL and come up big in the transfer portal and you don't even play in a bowl game? Ouch. But that is a 'what-if' better left for another day.

"Or another coach not named Day? I have believed in the 45-year-old coach through the good (66 of 76 games ranked in the top five, with three trips to the playoff) and bad (late November, duh), but there is no denying his teams spit the bit against Michigan. And Saturday was the worst of them all, which is why what feels like a now-vocal majority wants someone other than Day running the show."

– **Rob Oller**

The Columbus Dispatch

"If it wasn't clear before, it's obvious now: Michigan has a massive psychological edge on Ohio State. These games bring out the best in Michigan and the absolute worst in Ohio State. For this Michigan team, which lost five games, to beat this Ohio State team as a three-touchdown underdog is one of the biggest upsets in the history of the series. For Sherrone Moore, Michigan's first-year head coach, this is a signature win that transforms this season from a disappoint-

ment to a year that will be remembered for how it finished."

– **Austin Meek**
The Athletic

"Ohio State's offensive line injuries have been a problem all season. The Buckeyes are missing starting left tackle Josh Simmons and center Seth McLaughlin, and their reshuffled unit gave them no chance to run on the Michigan defensive line.

"Ohio State ran for just 77 yards, averaging 3.0 yards per carry. Despite the struggles between the tackles, it stuck with the run thinking it would tire out the Michigan defensive front. Michigan never wore down, though, and it made Ohio State one-dimensional. Yet again, the Wolverines won the matchup in the trenches with superior physicality."

– **Cameron Teague Robinson**
The Athletic

"I don't know if the Buckeye administration will pull the plug now ahead of the College Football Playoff or it will wait to see if Ohio State can win a national championship to make up for its fourth straight loss to Michigan. But anything short of a national title coupled with Saturday's embarrassing three-point loss to a deeply flawed Wolverine squad should lead to Day's dismissal. Your job as the head football coach of Ohio State is to beat Michigan, whether That Team Up North is great, good or not-so-good. And Day can't beat any of those versions of Michigan. The Buckeyes lost to a five-loss Michigan team led by a quarterback who threw for just 62 yards in the game and tossed two interceptions.

"Ohio State's defense was terrific, but its offensive game plan was horrendous. The Buckeyes kept trying to run the ball up the middle, even when they couldn't, and they didn't throw the ball to their otherworldly receivers nearly enough. Freshman phenom Jeremiah Smith had a wide-open touchdown catch late in the second quarter. ... and then was only targeted twice in the entire second half. He was not targeted at any point in the final 25 minutes of a one-possession game against a hated rival. That is coaching malpractice. As was the late fourth-quarter penalty for illegal substitution on third-and-2 that gave Michigan a fresh set of downs ahead of the eventual game-winning field goal. And the lasting image of the game, Day standing on the field alone as his players fought Wolverines over a Block M flag planted on the field, Day doing nothing to intervene."

– **Nicole Auerbach**
NBC Sports

"The offense is supposed to be the thing that wins these games. It's supposed to be the

reason why we believe OSU is a national title contender. Fixing the defense is supposed to be the bonus. It was done so that the Buckeyes didn't have to worry about the defense getting in the way of their success.

"That didn't happen in the first two of the four losses to Michigan, hence allowing 42 and 45 points. But Jim Knowles fixed those issues in the past two seasons. They gave up 30 last year – with seven being a direct result of the offense's pitfalls – then allowed just 13 on Saturday.

"Yet every time the defense got better in this game, the offense made it even harder for the defense to succeed. So why didn't those guys come to the stand to take accountability for the role the offense keeps playing in not playing up to its standard and expectation?"

"Instead, you allowed your players to answer for you as they stood at a microphone, trying their hardest to hold back tears knowing they'll forever be known as the Buckeyes who couldn't beat Michigan.

"This coaching staff needs to answer for its failures."

– **Stephen Means**
Cleveland.com

"On his weekly coach's show last Monday, Ohio State coach Ryan Day described his team's losing streak to Michigan in stark terms. 'It's one of the worst things that's ever happened to me in my life, quite honestly, other than losing my father (at age 9) and a few other things,' he said. 'And for my family, (it's) the worst thing that's happened. So we can never have that happen again. Ever.'

"It happened again, and this one was so much worse than those past three losses to top-five Michigan teams. This year's Wolverines were 6-5 and three-touchdown underdogs, yet they still came to the Horseshoe and humiliated the second-ranked Buckeyes 13-10 in a mistake-strewn game. It ended with Michigan players attempting to plant their flag at midfield, fights breaking out, the police pepper-spraying guys on both teams. Which Day watched unfold in front of him in an emotionless daze.

"Whether by his own choice or his employer's, it's hard to imagine Day will be back in Columbus next season to try again, given the anguish he says the Michigan losses have caused him and his family. Perhaps he will take a cue from John Calipari, who read the room after Kentucky basketball's unthinkable NCAA Tournament loss to Oakland last March and hatched his own exit plan to Arkansas."

– **Stewart Mandel**
The Athletic

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OHIO STATE VS. MICHIGAN



SONNY BROCKWAY

HAIL TO THE VICTORS — Quarterback Davis Warren (16) begins celebrating along with wide receiver Tyler Morris and offensive lineman Giovanni El-Hadi as the clock strikes zero on the Wolverines' improbable 13-10 triumph over the No. 2 Buckeyes on Nov. 30 in Ohio Stadium.

"In my opinion, the rationale for this loss lies deep in Ohio State's psyche, past the parts that prepare game scripts and read opposing defenses. Look deep past this program's frontal lobe, search the furthest part of this team's brain and you'll find the real problem with OSU's approach to Michigan: a Wolverine.

"That Michigan lives in Ohio State's mind is no surprise. It's not even supposed to be a bad thing. Ask coach Ryan Day or any other Buckeye, and they'll tell you: We're always thinking about Michigan.

"The problem is how that philosophy manifests. When coach Sherrone Moore says the same verse, he means UM is always side-eyeing its rival, watching their progress, or preparing another wrinkle (Michigan's best pass play Saturday came when receiver Kendrick Bell targeted receiver Tyler Morris, who drew a pass-interference penalty) to beat Ohio State.

"When the Buckeyes say it, they think about all the pain Michigan has caused them. They remember stolen signs, a third base comment and countless bruising, backbreaking runs from the last three seasons."

— Jimmy Watkins
Cleveland.com

"The better response to a humiliating loss and Michigan's taunting would have been to simply keep your heads down and get off the field. But this was another example of a rivalry gone overboard.

"It's a football game, man. And it has run off the leash of perspective, into an unhealthy realm that it didn't use to occupy. Yeah, there have been moments: Ohio State players tearing down the 'Go Blue' banner in Michigan Stadium in the 1970s; Woody Hayes broke a sideline marker over his knee in 1973. But now we've reached a point where losing is literally intolerable.

"John Cooper got 13 years as coach of the Buckeyes with a 2-10-1 record against Michigan. Harbaugh lost his first five against Ohio State as coach of the Wolverines but got a

chance to turn that around. Such patience seems unrealistic in the current toxic times.

"Day is 66-10 at Ohio State, a ridiculous record, and yet it isn't good enough to keep him from being booed off the field by the angriest non-NFL crowd I've ever heard. His kids had to listen to it. This is what Day signed up for as coach of the Buckeyes — and he's paid phenomenally well, more than \$10 million a year. Beating Michigan is part of the assignment — especially a 6-5, three-touchdown-underdog Michigan that is muddling through life after Harbaugh.

"But to think — and say — that it 'can never happen again, ever,' is both unrealistic and extreme. The burden of a rivalry he can't win has become too much."

— Pat Forde
Sports Illustrated

"Defensively, the Buckeyes did play well, holding Michigan to just 13 points — seven of which were gifted to the Wolverines on a bad Will Howard interception that gave Michigan the ball at the Buckeyes 2.

"But aside from the pointless Cotton Bowl a season ago, this was the worst offensive performance of the Day era — and it's not close. The Buckeyes kept pounding the ball into the Michigan defensive line, failing to run the ball with any efficiency and basically wasting downs with the run game. When they passed, Howard was under pressure for most of the afternoon. When he wasn't, he threw two interceptions.

"This game brought back 1996 vibes when Michigan stunned a heavily-favored Ohio State team 13-9 in the Horseshoe. This was 13-10 because the Buckeyes could not capitalize in the red zone, couldn't make field goals and couldn't get out of their own way. That 1996 game was Cooper's worst loss to Michigan because it kept the Buckeyes from winning the national title. This edition of a rivalry upset loss cost Day and his team a chance to play for the Big Ten championship and earn a bye in the 12-team

College Football Playoff."

— Spencer Holbrook
Letterman Row

"What Moore knew — and what he believed — was that his team was more physical than Ohio State. He knew that his defensive line would be the best the Buckeyes had seen. He knew his offensive line was getting better, and that (Davis) Warren had played his best game of the year against Northwestern the week before.

"And that to dismiss his performance because it was against Northwestern would be a mistake. He didn't say that. Didn't need to say it.

"But he knew what it meant. That his team would have a chance. More than a chance. That his guys had given Oregon something and almost beat Indiana and then used the bye week to refocus and reset, and he talked about it last week.

"That resetting sounded like empty optimism because of the record, and those five losses, and the lack of offensive consistency. It sounded like this because college football is about stories, and Michigan's story was that it didn't have enough to beat a team like Ohio State.

"Turns out — it did."

— Shawn Windsor
Detroit Free Press

"So in this era of college football, after the run of dominance Ohio State had, this win feels extra special. Jim Harbaugh and many of the players who led the 2021-23 run left Ann Arbor, with a mission accomplished. Sher-

rone Moore took over and while we hoped for continuity, the truth was a reset needed to occur. This is Sherrone Moore's program now, but that continuity showed itself on Saturday.

"In 2021 it was the snow. In 2022 it was just a few bad plays. In 2023 it was Stallions. This year, there are no excuses. Ohio State needs to accept what Michigan believes and knows. They simply want to win the game more."

— Trevor McCue
Rivals.com

"The difference in this game was belief. Michigan had every reason to think it couldn't stack up against its archrival this year. Its old coach, Jim Harbaugh, was gone. So were his coordinators. The quarterback position was a carousel of problems. Its best offensive player, Colston Loveland, was out with an injury. Its best defensive player, Will Johnson, was injured as well. It had lost five of 11 games already this year.

"Meanwhile, the Buckeyes had been keying for this moment for 364 days, seething and seeing red after three straight rivalry losses to the Wolverines. The game was in Columbus. The fan base was fired up. Michigan, a 19.5-point underdog, couldn't point to a single thing on paper that gave it a real edge.

"But the game is not played on paper. It's not really played on grass, either. It's played on gray matter, the kind between your ears. If you believe in yourself and you've done it before, the combination can lift you physically to unimaginable heights."

— Mitch Albom
Detroit Free Press

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The Numbers Game

Michigan 13, Ohio State 10

Nov. 30, 2024 - Ohio Stadium, Columbus, Ohio

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
MICHIGAN	0	10	0	3	13
OHIO STATE	3	7	0	0	10

First Quarter

OSU - Fielding, 29-yard field goal, 6:14.

Second Quarter

UM - Mullings, 1-yard rush (Zvada kick), 12:37.

UM - Zvada, 54-yard field goal, 2:15.

OSU - Smith, 10-yard pass from Howard (Fielding kick), 0:30.

Fourth Quarter

UM - Zvada, 21-yard field goal, 0:45.

Att. - 106,005

Weather - Sunny, 27 F

Team Statistics

	UM	OSU
First Downs	13	16
Rushing	6	3
Passing	5	11
Penalty	2	2
Rushes-Yards	42-172	26-77
Passing Yards	62	175
Passes (Comp.-Att.-Int.)	9-16-2	19-33-2
Offensive Plays	58	59
Total Net Yards	234	252
Third Down Efficiency	7-14	6-16
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-1	1-2
Punts-Avg.	3-47.3	3-36.0
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	0-0
Penalties	4-50	2-19
Time of Possession	33:35	26:25

Individual Statistics

RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.) - **UM**: Mullings 32-116; Orji 3-32; Edwards 4-11; Warren 1-11; Marshall 1-3; Team 1-(-1). **OSU**: Judkins 12-46; Henderson 10-21; Howard 4-10.

PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD) - **UM**: Warren 9-16-2-62-0. **OSU**: Howard 19-33-2-175-1.

RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.) - **UM**: Klein 3-13; Edwards 2-2; O'Leary 1-18; Morris 1-14; Hansen 1-9; Moore 1-6. **OSU**: Tate 6-58; Smith 5-35; Egbuka 4-51; Henderson 2-25; Scott Jr. 2-6.

PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long) - **UM**: Doman 3-47.3-68. **OSU**: McGuire 3-36.0-41.

PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - **UM**: Morris 1-2. **OSU**: None.

KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.) - **UM**: Marshall 1-11; Taylor 1-6. **OSU**: Henderson 1-0.

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

INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.) - **UM**: Hall 1-11; Paige 1-0. **OSU**: Sawyer 1-12; Downs 1-0.

SACKS (No.-Yds.) - **UM**: None. **OSU**: None.

TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.) - **UM**: Hausmann 1.5-1; Guy 1-2; Hood 1-1; Grant 0.5-1. **OSU**:

Hamilton 0.5-1; Ransom 0.5-1; Tuimolou 0.5-1; Williams 0.5-1; McDonald 0.5-0; Simon 0.5-0.

TACKLES (Solo-Asst-Tot.) - **UM**: Hausmann 3-5-8; Graham 5-2-7; Walker 4-2-6; Hall 3-2-5;

Barham 3-2-5; Berry 3-1-4; Grant 0-4-4; Paige 1-2-3; Guy 2-0-2; Hill 2-0-2; Johnson 1-1-2; Benny 0-2-

2; Hood 1-0-1; Hillman 1-0-1; Stewart 1-0-1; Brandt 0-1-1; Hansen 0-1-1; Hinton 0-1-1. **OSU**: Downs 4-7-

11; Ransom 3-6-9; Simon 1-8-9; Williams 1-6-7; Reese 1-6-7; Styles 2-3-5; Hamilton 0-5-5; Burke 4-0-4;

Sawyer 2-2-4; Tuimolou 1-2-3; McDonald 1-2-3; Igbinosun 2-0-2; Hancock 1-1-2; Pierce 1-0-1; Tate 1-0-1;

Gurd 1-0-1.

PLAYERS IN THE GAME - **UM**: Warren, Klein, Mullings, Bredeson, Crippen, El-Hadi, Pirebe, Link,

Hinton, Morris, O'Leary, Stewart Barham, Berry, Hall, Walker, Hausmann, Johnson, Graham, Paige,

Grant, Moore, Morgan, Orji, Bell, Jones, Goodwin, Doman, Dunlap, Sullivan, Marshall, Curtis, Benny,

McLaurin, Benjamin, Moore, Rolder, Hood, Hill, Harris, Taylor, Bolvin, Kuzdal, Hoffman, Guy, Hewlett,

Wagner, Bennett, Efobi, Giudice, Hillman, Anderson, Edwards, Persi, Hansen, Marshall, Brandt, Cameron,

Zvada. **OSU**: Tate, Howard, Egbuka, Henderson, Smith, Siereveld, Fryar, Jackson, Hinzman, Tshabola,

Kacmarek, Simon, Igbinosun, Burke, Downs, Sawyer, Tuimolou, Hamilton, Styles, Hancock, Ransom,

Williams, Judkins, Inniss, Thurman, McClain, Reese, Mathews Jr., Pierce, Styles Jr., Brown, Powers,

Fielding, Velazquez, McGuire, Ferlmann, Gurd, Montgomery, Padilla, Fitzpatrick, Adolph, Christian, Scott

Jr., Hartford, Ballard, Curry, Jackson Jr., McDonald.

Season Statistics

2024 Game-By-Game

Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Aug. 31	(2) AKRON	W, 52-6	102,011
Sept. 7	(2) WESTERN MICHIGAN	W, 56-0	102,665
Sept. 21	(3) MARSHALL	W, 49-14	103,871
Sept. 28	(3) Michigan State	W, 38-7	71,114
Oct. 5	(3) IOWA	W, 35-7	105,135
Oct. 12	(3) Oregon (2)	L, 32-31	60,129
Oct. 26	(4) NEBRASKA	W, 21-17	104,830
Nov. 2	(4) Penn State (3)	W, 20-13	111,030
Nov. 9	(3) PURDUE	W, 45-0	103,463
Nov. 16	(2) Northwestern	W, 31-7	38,147
Nov. 23	(2) INDIANA (5)	W, 38-15	105,751
Nov. 30	(2) MICHIGAN	L, 13-10	106,005

OSU's gameday AP ranking is in parentheses before the opponent, while the opponent's ranking is after the name.

Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	248	170
Rushing	104	71
Passing	135	79
Penalty	9	20
Average Per Game/Rush	169.2	96.8
Average Per Game/Pass	254.3	144.3
Total Offense	5082	2893
Total Plays	749	706
Average Per Game	423.5	241.1
Average Per Play	6.8	4.1
Penalties-Yards	52-481	42-320
Fumbles-Lost	12-5	18-8
Third Down Efficiency	61-143	56-166
Percentage	43%	34%
Fourth Down Efficiency	18-26	8-21
Percentage	69%	38%
Sacks-Yards	35-231	13-85
Time Of Possession Avg.	29:54	30:06

Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	76	150	135	65	0	426	35.5
Opponents	33	53	9	36	0	131	10.9

Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Quinshon Judkins	147	805	5.5	8	86
T. Henderson	108	751	7.0	6	53
James Peoples	42	191	4.5	2	18
Will Howard	72	131	1.8	7	19
S. Williams-Dixon	7	53	7.6	0	31
Jeremiah Smith	4	47	11.8	1	19
Julian Sayin	2	24	12.0	0	19
Emeka Egbuka	5	21	4.2	0	13
Devin Brown	7	13	1.9	0	10
Carnell Tate	0	6	0.0	0	6
Mason Maggs	1	3	3.0	0	3
Team	10	-15	-1.5	0	0
OSU Totals	405	2030	5.0	24	86
OPP Totals	408	1162	2.8	9	38

Passing	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
Will Howard	227	314	72.3	2860	27-8	172.1
Devin Brown	10	19	52.6	108	1-0	117.7
Julian Sayin	5	11	45.5	84	1-0	139.6
OSU Totals	242	344	70.3	3052	29-8	168.0
OPP Totals	179	298	60.1	1731	4-9	107.2

Receiving	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Emeka Egbuka	60	743	12.4	9	68
Jeremiah Smith	57	934	16.4	10	70
Carnell Tate	41	583	14.2	4	40
T. Henderson	19	135	7.1	0	32
Gee Scott Jr.	16	150	9.4	2	34
Quinshon Judkins	15	109	7.3	1	21
Brandon Inniss	12	151	12.6	1	27
Will Kacmarek	5	58	11.6	0	32
Bryson Rodgers	5	46	9.2	0	12
Jelani Thurman	4	42	10.5	1	19
Jayden Ballard	2	18	9.0	0	12
Bennett Christian	2	61	30.5	1	55
David Adolph	1	10	10.0	0	10
Kojo Antwi	1	8	8.0	0	8
Patrick Gurd	1	6	6.0	0	6
James Peoples	1	-2	-2.0	0	0
OSU Totals	242	3052	12.6	29	70
OPP Totals	179	1731	9.7	4	69

Scoring	TD	EPK	EPR	EPKC	FG	PTS
Jayden Fielding	-	54-54	-	-	9-12	77
Jeremiah Smith	11	-	-	-	-	66
Q. Judkins	9	-	-	-	-	54
Emeka Egbuka	9	-	-	-	-	54
Will Howard	7	-	-	-	-	42
T. Henderson	6	-	-	-	-	36
Carnell Tate	4	-	-	-	-	24

James Peoples	2	-	-	-	-	12
Gee Scott Jr.	2	-	-	-	-	12
Bennett Christian	1	-	-	-	-	6
Gabe Powers	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jack Sawyer	1	-	-	-	-	6
Lathan Ransom	1	-	-	-	-	6
Brandon Inniss	1	-	-	-	-	6
Jelani Thurman	1	-	-	-	-	6
Caleb Downs	1	-	-	-	-	6
Austin Snyder	-	3-3	-	-	-	3
OSU Totals	56	57-57	-	-	-	9-12 426
OPP Totals	14	10-10	-	2	11-16	131

FG Distance	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Jayden Fielding	2-2	2-4	5-6	0-0	9-12
OSU Totals	2-2	2-4	5-6	0-0	9-12
OPP Totals	4-5	1-2	4-6	2-3	11-16

Punting	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Joe McGuire	32	1354	42.3	0	61
Nick McLarty	2	65	32.5	0	35
OSU Totals	34	1419	41.7	0	61
OPP Totals	64	2709	42.3	2	68

Interceptions	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Denzel Burke	2	31	15.5	0	31
Davison Igbinosun	2	45	22.5	0	45
Lathan Ransom	1	24	24.0	0	24
Jordan Hancock	1	0	0.0	0	0
Jack Sawyer	1	12	12.0	0	12
Gabe Powers	1	29	29.0	1	29
Caleb Downs	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	9	141	15.7	1	45
OPP Totals	8	112	14.0	1	36

Punt Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Brandon Inniss	12	109	9.1	0	36
Caleb Downs	5	102	20.4	1	79
Jayden Ballard	1	0	0.0	0	0
David Adolph	1	0	0.0	0	0
Caden Curry	1	0	0.0	0	0
OSU Totals	20	211	10.6	1	79
OPP Totals	8	45	5.6	0	14

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
T. Henderson	5	58	11.6	0	19
Brandon Inniss	3	47	15.7	0	18
Jayden Ballard	2	23	11.5	0	23
Emeka Egbuka	1	16	16.0	0	16
OSU Totals	12	144	12.0	0	23
OPP Totals	10	152	15.2	0	25

Def. Leaders	Solo	As
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OSU More Than A Temporary Home For Howard

By **PATRICK ENGELS**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Coming off a 2023 season at Kansas State in which he threw for 2,643 passing yards and 24 touchdowns while also rushing for another 351 yards and nine scores, then-22-year-old quarterback Will Howard had two options for his football future.

On the one hand, he could have built off a strong senior season with the Wildcats and entered the 2024 NFL draft, where – according to Howard himself – he would have been a fourth- to sixth-round selection.

On the other hand, he could have stayed in college and played at Ohio State – which was aggressively pursuing him after losing 2023 starter Kyle McCord to Syracuse – under head coach Ryan Day and then-offensive coordinator Bill O'Brien, using another year to develop as a pro-ready quarterback while also chasing a Big Ten and national championship.

With all factors considered, the Downingtown, Pa., native decided to let his NFL career wait another year and join the Scarlet and Gray, committing to Day and the Buckeyes on Jan. 4.

It was a decision that Howard said was driven by his desire to improve his draft stock and fine-tune his game for the next level at a powerhouse program such as Ohio State.

"I looked at the starting quarterbacks in the NFL, the vast majority of them are drafted in the first, second round," Howard said in the offseason. "Last year I was projected third, fourth, fifth, sixth (round). So I was like, 'If I can give myself a chance to get into that Day One conversation,' – ultimately my goal is to be a starter in the NFL, so I was going to take that and come to Ohio State.

"It was a no-brainer after I talked to Coach Day. I was a little uneasy, but he talked to me and through that experience really gave me some good tidbits and I felt really comfortable with it. I just felt like the opportunity was too good."

Returning to college to further develop their game is a sound idea for any college athlete looking to make it big at the next level. But for Howard, his time at Ohio State has proved to be much more valuable than just becoming a more well-rounded prospect.

In his 11 months with the program, the former Wildcat has not just improved his overall game but fully immersed himself into the tradition and responsibility that comes with being a starter for the Buckeyes, emerging as a key voice and calming presence on a talent-laden team that, even after losing to Michigan 13-10 on Nov. 30, still has a chance to win a national title with Howard leading the way.

"And then some," Howard said when asked on Nov. 26 if coming to Ohio State was everything he could have asked for. "I truly am so grateful for this opportunity that I had to come here, and it could not have ended up going better. I love it here. I

love my guys. I love everyone in this building. I love this place. I love this city. It's been everything I could have asked for and more."

While Howard is happy with his decision to come to Columbus, that doesn't mean his stint with the program didn't come without its initial lumps.

The fifth-year transfer admittedly struggled to acclimate himself to the Buckeyes' complex offensive system – now led by offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Chip Kelly, who took over for O'Brien after he left for Boston College – in the early months of the offseason, which made the quarterback battle appear more open than anticipated entering fall camp.

Howard not only had to earn the starting job with his play, but also with his ability to connect with and gain the respect of his teammates, something he acknowledged he had to accomplish in the offseason in order to be viewed as the right guy at quarterback for the Buckeyes.

"One of the biggest things for me is relationships," Howard said on March 4, exactly two months after committing to OSU. "Because people aren't going to respect you, they're not going to listen to you if they don't know you. They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. And that's what I've been trying to focus on during my first couple months here.

"I know I'm not going to come in right away and be barking and knowing what all's going on. I'm still figuring stuff out. But the best I can do is be encouraging to my teammates, have good relationships with everyone. And then that's where that starts, that's where that's where I can feel like I start being a leader."

Howard certainly earned enough respect in the locker room over the offseason to be named the team's starter in August, a title and responsibility that he did not – and still doesn't – take lightly.

"I said (when) I was coming here that I didn't want to be half in on this thing," Howard said before the Michigan game. "I'm going to be a Buckeye."

It is that type of mentality that allowed him to be highly respected in the locker room come Michigan week, when several of his teammates spoke glowingly about how much he has meant to the team's success on and off the field this season.

"I think Will is an ultimate competitor," senior wide receiver and team captain Emeka Egbuka said on Nov. 26. "Every single week he gets better and better at football, and every single week he becomes a better and better leader. Will is someone we can really look to, and he's going to rally the troops. He's going to rally the entire team. So I'm really glad he came here, and I'm really glad he's a Buckeye."

"He's a wonderful leader," fifth-year senior, team captain and "Block O" recipient Cody Simon added. "Throughout the adversity we've gone through – especially injury-wise – he's been a person who you can always look to. He's always confident, he's always upbeat. I can't say enough good

things about him. He's a great dude."

Howard hasn't just gotten to this point because of his strong leadership qualities and confident mentality – the latter of which was evident during Ohio State's Nov. 23 win over Indiana when he took several jabs at the also-brash IU coach Curt Cignetti after the Buckeyes' wrapped up their 38-15 victory.

But he has also earned that team-wide respect due to his elite play on the field, which has seemingly propelled him into becoming one of the better quarterbacks in the country.

With an entire regular season now under his belt, Howard ranks among the nation's best signal callers in passing yards (26th, 2,860), passing touchdowns (ninth, 27), passing efficiency (third, 172.1) and yards per pass attempt (eighth, 9.1).

Each of these statistics, along with his added 131 rushing yards and seven touchdowns on the ground, have helped Ohio State secure a 10-2 record heading into postseason play.

But with all that said, perhaps Howard's most impressive trait this year is his 72.3 completion percentage, a mark that is a full 11 percentage points higher than the highest completion percentage he had at Kansas State (61.3, 2023).

Howard has completed 80.0 percent or more of his passes in six games this season, the most ever by an Ohio State quarterback, eclipsing C.J. Stroud's previous record of five. Earlier this season, Howard said that his record completion percentage numbers were a product of the elite coaching he has received from Day and Kelly all season. They have taught him to take what the defense gives him and rely on his talented pass-catchers rather than trying to make the perfect throw.

"I feel like a lot of times in my career at Kansas State, I was trying to force things in tight windows, and I didn't really need to," he said. "There's just completions all over the field. And something we emphasized in preseason training camp was – I was shooting for an 80 percent completion percentage every single day. That was my goal.

"Completions are devastating to a defense. Whether it's a completion for (just a few) yards or a completion for 50, it doesn't matter just as long as you're getting the ball in your playmakers' hands."

Howard was unable to continue that efficiency in the shocking loss to the Wolverines, however, completing just 19 of his 33 attempts – a season-low 57.6 percent

– in what was by far his worst outing as a Buckeye, one which also included just 175 passing yards, one touchdown and two interceptions.

It is a crushing end to the regular season for Howard, especially when considering how much importance he put on winning The Game and breaking the then three-game losing streak to the Wolverines for Day, his teammates and Ohio State fans across the state, each of whom had been desperately longing for a victory in the rivalry and hoped that Howard could be the one to put them over the top.

"The bottom line is, we lost and it hurts. I can't say it enough. I'm sorry to Buckeye Nation," a teary-eyed Howard said after the game. "This one hurts like hell. I feel for those guys that came back, I feel for Coach Day, everything they poured into this ..."

Ohio State's upset loss to Michigan – as well as Howard's poor performance – is undoubtedly going to sting for a while for all involved. But when looking at the overall body of work at quarterback, Ohio State's one-year transfer rental has been an overwhelmingly positive investment for the program, at least in the eyes of their head coach.

"Buckeye Nation is now seeing, after 11 games, that this guy is a winner," Day said after the Indiana game. "He's tough. He cares about his teammates. He's a leader. He's the heart and soul of our team."

The fifth-year Howard will never get another chance to lead the Buckeyes to a win over the archrival Wolverines – something that will be a stain on his Ohio State legacy forever – but he knows that there is still much more out there left for him to accomplish in scarlet and gray.

Before he exhausts his collegiate eligibility and lives out his dream in the NFL, Howard will get another chance to lead the Buckeyes in the new 12-team College Football Playoff, where they are in line to potentially host a first-round game at Ohio Stadium as a 5-8 seed.

Regardless of how far he takes them in the postseason, Howard knows he made the right decision to play his final collegiate season for Ohio State, a place that will always be home for him no matter where his football career takes him in the future.

"I know this may be my last game at Ohio Stadium, but it's not my last game as a Buckeye," Howard said referring to the Michigan game. "We still have plenty of things to take care of. We're far from done. But it has just been amazing. I love this place. And I'll be a Buckeye forever."



Will Howard

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Sawyer A Hometown Hero For Buckeyes

By **GREG WILSON**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

When Jack Sawyer first committed to Ohio State on Feb. 3, 2019, he had dreams of continuing the dominance that he had watched the Buckeyes boast for years throughout his childhood.

But his four years in Columbus haven't gone exactly according to the plan that he likely had for his career with the Buckeyes going all the way back to when he committed over five years ago.

It was revealed on Dec. 4, 2018, that after the Rose Bowl, Ryan Day would be taking over for Urban Meyer as the head coach at Ohio State, and just over a month after Day officially became the leader of the program, Sawyer became his first commitment, with defensive line coach Larry Johnson serving as a big draw for the Pickerington (Ohio) North five-star.

"Coach Johnson, me and him really get along well," the then-high schooler Sawyer told BSB after he committed. "I like his techniques. I like his coaching style. He's obviously one of the best in the country at what he does, too, so me and him have a good connection."

He was the No. 3 overall prospect in the 2021 class at the time, and many people had high hopes for his Buckeye career, looking back at some of the other great players whom Johnson was able to develop and send off to the NFL like Chase Young and Nick and Joey Bosa, among many more.

That path was exactly the one that Sawyer wanted to take when he signed with the Buckeyes.

"The blueprint is out there when you look at what the Bosas and Chase Young have done," he said. "I know if I go there with my head down and work as hard as I can, things are going to take care of themselves. I'm looking forward to getting there and working with the coaches."

But living up to the expectations of playing like either of the Bosas or Young is extremely tough, if not impossible, and Sawyer began to learn that quickly when he saw limited playing time as a freshman, failing to be as consistently disruptive to opposing offenses as he had been in high school.

Taking some time to adjust to the level of Big Ten football isn't by any means unheard of, so his 13 tackles, three sacks, two quarterback hurries and one forced fumble were still very encouraging when looking forward to the player he could turn into in the years to come.

But Sawyer's path began to look a little bit different when JT Tuimoloau and Zach Harrison locked up the edge rusher spots, and he had to try to earn his way onto the field in a position called the appropriately named Jack.

The hybrid defensive end, linebacker role was not the position that Sawyer had been recruited to fill, and while he did play some middle linebacker during his early high school years, he wasn't fully suited to be there at the college level. However, the athleticism he possessed had allowed him to move around the football field and play many different positions at Pickerington North, even suiting up as the quarterback in his senior season when the Tigers' starter was injured.

Still, Sawyer attacked the challenge with an open mind, ready to help his team in any way he could if it meant that he was able to get on the field and have an impact. Since the Jack's responsibility isn't squarely to rush the quarterback – instead many times the Jack needs just to hold his block and plug up rushing gaps on the strong side of the field – Sawyer's stats didn't



SONNY BROCKWAY

MAKING A STATEMENT — Jack Sawyer's dream of finally beating Michigan evaporated in stunning fashion on Nov. 30, but he made what could have been a game-changing interception in the fourth quarter with the score tied 10-10. He was also at the center of the postgame brawl with the Wolverines when they attempted to plant a flag at midfield.

stack up the way they were supposed to.

However, he still did see some production at the Jack in the 2022 season, finishing the year with 4½ sacks, tied for the most on the team that season with Michael Hall Jr. But when Harrison left for the NFL, he went back to his natural position on the edge for the 2023 season.

Despite having a solid sophomore year statistically – which also included 24 tackles (6½ for loss) and two quarterback hurries – he was very happy to return to the position he was recruited to play, especially since the first two years of his time at Ohio State hadn't gone exactly the way he had hoped.

"I definitely feel very comfortable being back at defensive end," Sawyer said in August of 2023. "I feel happy about it. When me, (defensive coordinator Jim) Knowles and Coach (Johnson) talked about it after the season, that's what I wanted to do, and that's what they thought I was best at too. So it was great, and it's been good being back at defensive end."

"I think a lot of us haven't really had the career we thought we'd have the first two seasons," Sawyer added. "I think it's hard to come in and, on the defensive line, put up those huge numbers. I don't think a lot of guys do that. So I just think collectively as a D-line, if we just put one foot in front of the other every day and try to get better every single day, before we know it at the end of the season, we'll look up and see all those numbers. So we can't really fixate on those things in the moment."

Before that season, Young came back to visit the program and Sawyer was able to take in some wise words from the former Buckeye who was able to reach his potential in Columbus, eventually becoming the second overall pick in the 2020 NFL draft.

"We had a chance to talk to him for a quick second," Sawyer said that spring. "He was telling all of us that the more you focus on (statistical) goals and the NFL, the worse you're going to perform. The more you focus on being in the moment at Ohio State, the better you're going to perform. That spoke volumes."

But the beginning of the 2023 season was more of the same when Sawyer was on the edge. Through 10 games of the season, he had a total of 32 tackles with 2½ tackles for loss and 1½ sacks while forcing one fumble and breaking up two passes.

But against Minnesota on Nov. 18, 2023, with the season winding down, something clicked for Sawyer, and he began the best three-game stretch he has had at Ohio State. Against the Golden Gophers, he had six tackles, 3½ for loss, a sack, a quarterback hurry and a forced fumble.

He continued that positive momentum into the next two games against Michigan in Ann Arbor and then Missouri in the Cotton Bowl. He finished those three games with a combined 16 tackles, 7½ tackles for loss, five sacks and three quarterback hurries along with the fumble he forced against the Gophers.

He had shown signs of breaking out a few games earlier when the Buckeyes went into Camp Randall Stadium against Wisconsin on Oct. 28, 2023, and came out with a 24-10 win in which Sawyer had six tackles and a forced fumble.

"I felt like I was in a groove the whole second half of the season," Sawyer said in the spring. "I felt like myself again, and I was just out there playing and having fun with my teammates. I think that when you come here and expect to hit the field and it to be a certain way, it's hard to get over that for a little bit. I think you can look at all of us on the D-line, as a front we've all had our own journey to where we're playing right now."

"My confidence kept growing and growing," Sawyer added. "When you start making plays, it helps. Early in the year, there were a lot of plays I could have made, but I was a step away."

While he was already projected to be taken in the 2024 NFL draft if he chose to go that route, his play bumped him up into the conversation to possibly be taken on the first day of the event.

But that wasn't what was on Sawyer's mind after the season. He had one major thing weigh-

ing on him: In his three seasons, he never was able to beat Michigan.

Growing up in nearby Pickerington as an Ohio State fan, Sawyer was well aware of The Game and how much the rivalry meant to Ohio State players and fans alike. When he was a kid, he saw absolute domination from the Buckeyes in the rivalry. Since he was born on May 6, 2002, he had experienced Ohio State losing to Michigan just two times, at least one of which he definitely doesn't remember happening since he was barely over 1 year old.

The only thing he knew was Ohio State being on the winning side. But when he started with the Buckeyes, that flipped. They were blown out by the Wolverines in both 2021 and 2022, falling by a combined score of 87-50. He didn't have much to do with either loss, appearing in both games but recording no statistics.

But in 2023 when the Buckeyes lost 30-24 in Ann Arbor, Sawyer was in the middle of his hot streak, but it wasn't enough to get the Buckeyes back on the winning side.

Even though all he knew was winning in the rivalry before he came to Ohio State, ever since he actually stepped on campus, all he knew was losing to Michigan. And that weighed on him heavily, something he has made abundantly clear since then.

"That's the reason why you come back," Sawyer said. "That's the reason why we all came back,"

For Sawyer, getting on the right side of The Game was much more important than the glory that comes with being an NFL player and reaching your childhood dreams.

That was something that Sawyer made clear in the week leading up to the Michigan game this season.

"I think I haven't won a rivalry game in football since seventh grade against Ridgeview," Sawyer said on Nov. 26, four days before The Game. "I never beat (Pickerington) Central in high school. (Ty Hamilton) and (Lorenzo Styles Jr.) like to rub that in a lot. Then you get here and fall short three years too. So I'm just excited for the opportunity to go out the right way this weekend."

"I'd be lying if I said I don't think about it every day. Sometimes I still think about the games against Central in high school. It's just the competitor in me. But I think going through those trials and tribulations has really shaped this team and the coaching staff as well."

Because of that sour taste in his mouth, Sawyer led the charge in trying to get his teammates to return to Ohio State for one more year, something his head coach noticed during the offseason.

"I think the way he played in that bowl game, he had some demeanor to him," Day said during the spring. "I thought he played his best football at the end of the season."

"But more importantly, it was saying, 'I'm coming back. I've got unfinished business. Let's go, boys. Let's rally around this thing.' To me, that was a sign of great leadership. That's something I won't forget. And those kinds of things have a chance to leave a legacy behind."

It was Sawyer who was the catalyst in bringing back the 2021 class, just like he was in getting that class together when they were in high school, rallying each of them around Day and the city of Columbus.

"I think that when we all decided to come back, I was the first guy to tell Coach Day I was coming back," Sawyer said at Big Ten Media Days this summer. "I told him I was coming back before the bowl game. And I made a group chat. We all were kind of texting and talking in

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

the weeks after the Missouri game.

"We were talking about it here and there, and I was throwing stuff in guys' ears, trying to talk to them about coming back and why we should come back and how much it would mean to the city if we came back into Ohio State and being able to etch our names in a legacy here if we won a national championship and beat those guys up north. So it was kind of a collective group effort, and a lot of decisions went into it.

"But everybody made their own decision, what was best for them. Ultimately, I'm glad that a lot of them decided to come back."

But it wasn't just the fact that Sawyer wanted to come back to play for a national title and get one last chance at beating Michigan. He said he also wanted to come back to play for Day, feeling like they didn't do what they had set out to for their coach.

"Coach Day is the only coach I'd want to play for in college football. I'd commit to him a hundred times over if I could," said Sawyer. "So that's why, when we talk about coming back, a lot of us have felt like we're his first real recruiting class. And we kind of all felt like we let him down in the sense of not reaching the goals that we set out to do when we signed our name on the dotted line. Going through the things we've gone through the past few years with Coach Day definitely feels like we've gone through them hand in hand."

The 2024 season got off to a similar start as 2023 did for Sawyer. He wasn't noticeably absent from the stat sheet, earning his first sack in the second game of the season – a 56-0 win over Western Michigan – after having to wait until the sixth the year before, but he hadn't been able to continue the otherworldly performance that he had shown in the latter end of the previous season.

However, he was still playing very well, de-

spite the sacks and the tackles for loss not coming at the rate he might have wanted. Unlike the year before, Sawyer was still getting into the backfield early and often, but the only problem was that opposing teams had game planned around the Buckeyes' elite defensive front and were getting the ball out very early, oftentimes right before Sawyer was able to make a tackle.

But after the Oregon game, the defense made some changes – the biggest of which was the pass rush and how often the Buckeyes would send blitzes – opening up more opportunities for Sawyer to get to the quarterback untouched, and he has taken advantage of that.

That much was obvious when the Buckeyes experimented some in their 45-0 shutout win over Purdue on Nov. 9, when they put linebacker C.J. Hicks at the Jack position and used many different pass-rush looks to disrupt the Boilermakers offense, a strategy that even resulted in a Tuimoloua strip-sack that Sawyer was able to scoop and score, the first touchdown of his Ohio State career.

"I'm not going to sit here and tell you 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 like you know you can," Sawyer said after the win over the Boilermakers. "It definitely frustrates you a little bit, but it's just staying where you're at, being thankful for where God's put us and knowing that it's going to come our way eventually."

But even while Sawyer and the rest of the defense were finding their grooves late in the season – beating No. 5 Indiana 38-15 and holding Kurtis Rourke to just 68 passing yards while also combining for five sacks and eight tackles for loss, 1½ of those sacks coming from Sawyer – his mind was on just one thing.

"Right now," he said when he was asked immediately after the game how quickly his mind

would pivot to Michigan. "I couldn't really care less – no offense – talking about this game because I mean, this is the game you come back for. This is a game that has impacted so many lives the last few years, and I want this one so bad for so many different reasons. So it's right now."

But when the time came around for that game, Sawyer and the Buckeyes couldn't exorcise their Michigan demons, and on Nov. 30, they fell to a far inferior Wolverines team 13-10 in what was an extremely emotional contest for Sawyer and his fellow seniors.

Sawyer gave his team chances to win the game, the defense playing very well through the first three quarters – the 10 points scored in that time frame were off 5 total yards from Michigan's offense – and he even had an interception early in the fourth quarter that seemed as if it had finally got the momentum on the Buckeyes' side late in the game. But the offense failed to come through, and Michigan's next drive ended up in a game-winning field goal.

The emotions boiled over after the game for Sawyer, who, while he wasn't trying to figure out how to deal with the fact that he would never get a pair of gold pants, saw Michigan players planting a flag at midfield in Ohio Stadium and led a charge of scarlet and gray to the opposing team's huddle where multiple fights broke out, Sawyer being held back by some of his teammates before he could make it to the Block O at the 50-yard line.

When the brawls finally cooled down, Michigan defensive end Derrick Moore continued to wave the maize and blue flag in the faces of the Buckeyes who were beginning to walk away, but Sawyer grabbed the flag, ripped it off the pole that Moore was holding, and threw the flag to the ground. That started more brawls that had to be broken up by police officers, who pep-

per-sprayed multiple players to break up the melee.

Sawyer could be seen being held back by tight ends coach Keenan Bailey after the altercation yelling, "They're not planting a flag on our f--g field again."

He was at the center of what happened in the postgame, and while he has not spoken publicly since the game ended, it's safe to assume that Ohio State's failure to beat its archrival will leave a stain on his four years.

It's possible that the first three seasons of Sawyer's time at Ohio State – the three losses to Michigan and not being able to compete for a Big Ten or a national championship – could have made the last one feel even better. He was the person who led the charge to bring everyone back to Columbus for one more season.

Even though he was on the losing side of the rivalry all four seasons, it seems that Sawyer will still be remembered very favorably by Buckeye fans for years to come, and there is still a way to make sure that returning for his senior season wasn't a complete failure in terms of the goals they made for themselves.

Even though they will have to watch Oregon and Penn State play in Indianapolis for the Big Ten championship, the Buckeyes still seem like a sure thing to be in the College Football Playoff and could still win it all, but they will have to win four games against some of the best teams in college football.

Winning a national title – which would be Day's first – would be a fitting end to Sawyer's career since that was what he set out to do with his head coach ever since he was Day's first commitment in 2019. There's some tough competition standing in the way in the postseason, but Sawyer and his teammates are closer to that goal than they have ever been.

The graphic features a large red ribbon at the top. Below it, two Roosters Official Gift Cards are shown on the left and right. The central focus is the Roosters mascot, a blue rooster wearing a Santa hat and sunglasses, with the letters 'BC' on its chest. Below the mascot is the text 'Roosters A FUN, CASUAL JOINT'. The background is light gray with faint snowflake patterns.

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Embarrassed Bucks Rebound In Big Way In '94

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 the 1994 season that rose from the ashes in late October to begin the most successful run of the John Cooper era.

By **MARK REA**

BSB Managing Editor Emeritus

There have been roller-coaster seasons over the 135-year history of the Ohio State football program, but perhaps none more so than 1994 when the Buckeyes suffered one of their most embarrassing losses of the modern era only to salvage their pride 22 days later with an exhilarating upset victory against their archrivals.

Almost from the outset of John Cooper's tenure as Ohio State head coach, a good-sized portion of the team's fan base had used any number of reasons to call for his ouster. But in the wake of a 63-14 pounding the Buckeyes absorbed in late October 1994 at the hands of top-ranked Penn State, the persistent criticism of Cooper morphed into a full-scale attack.

Even the most ardent of the coach's supporters could not stem the avalanche of calls for Cooper's job after the Nittany Lions bludgeoned the Buckeyes. But as he had done so many times before, the coach managed to rise from the ashes to confound his critics, rallying his team to an improbable finish that included something Cooper had never before accomplished as head coach of the Buckeyes – a victory against Michigan.

Following a Big Ten co-championship in 1993 and the program's first bowl victory in seven years, Buckeye Nation should have been in a celebratory mood. Nothing could have been further from the truth, however.

After the team teased its fans with eight consecutive victories to begin the '93 season, the hot start turned out to be nothing more than a mirage as a mistake-riddled tie against Wisconsin in early November and an inexplicable 28-0 loss at unranked Michigan two weeks later derailed the team's hopes for a Rose Bowl berth.

For six years, many Ohio State fans had been critical of Cooper, and the shutout loss to the Wolverines began a new round of condemnation. A 28-21 win against unranked BYU in the Holiday Bowl did little to stem that criticism, and with the buzzards circling over Cooper's head, criticism gave way to speculation about who would succeed him as Ohio State's next head coach.

Former OSU player and assistant coach Glen Mason, who was leading a resurgence at Kansas, seemed to be on nearly everyone's most-wanted list, while two other former Ohio State assistants – Gary Blackney of Bowling Green and Jim Tressel of Youngstown State – were among other fan favorites.

"I think some people have forgotten just how difficult those years must have been for John," Ohio State football historian Jack Park told BSB. "I've often wondered how he managed to persevere with the amount of criticism he received.

"Don't get me wrong. Every coach has to endure his share of criticism, and nearly

every coach at Ohio State has gone through tough times. But a lot of the criticism directed toward Coach Cooper was personal. It got downright nasty sometimes."

With very few exceptions, Cooper refused to show any bitterness toward his detractors. His appearance, however, was a telltale sign that the withering, almost-constant criticism had taken its toll.

The coach had come to Columbus in early 1988 with a quick gait, a ready smile and the golden glow of an Arizona tan, but six years later he didn't look like the same man. In addition to enduring a number of back surgeries to correct disc problems, the coach's smile seemed more forced, the gray hairs had taken over, and the deep lines etched on his face were more pronounced.

Still, Cooper never let on that he was focused on anything other than achieving the goals he had espoused his first day on the job – beating Michigan, winning the Big Ten, going to the Rose Bowl and playing for the national championship.

"Hard work," Cooper told BSB. "That was what made us successful at Tulsa, that was what made us successful at Arizona State, and I knew that was going to make us successful at Ohio State. Our strength and conditioning program was making us better. We were recruiting all over the country. Our players had bought into our system. We knew it was only a matter of time."

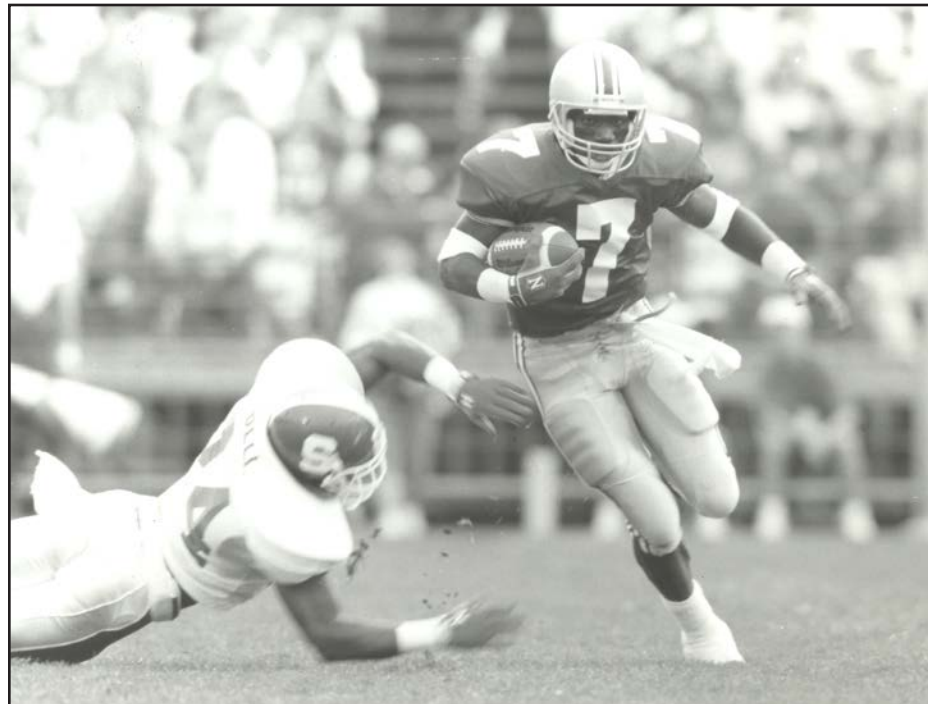
How much time Cooper had left in Columbus was the question. Recruiting was still purring along, and on the heels of the Big Ten co-championship in 1993, the Buckeyes signed one of the best classes in program history, a 20-member group that included future All-America offensive tackle Orlando Pace.

Any sort of satisfaction Cooper might have enjoyed regarding his 1994 recruiting victories, however, was tempered when Ohio State director of athletics Jim Jones announced his retirement effective in June 1994. The announcement came near the end of a lengthy NCAA investigation into the men's basketball program, and speculation was that Jones was forced out of the position he had held since Rick Bay's 1987 resignation immediately following the Earle Bruce firing. Jones insisted, though, he was simply taking advantage of early retirement.

Cooper could not have known it at the time, but Jones' announcement – as well as the hiring three months later of Andy Geiger as the new AD – would have a negative effect on the coach's future. That effect wouldn't reveal itself for several years, however.

As turmoil and turnover continued to affect other parts of the athletic department, Cooper kicked off spring practice in 1994 much the same way he had during his previous six years – looking to fill a hole on his staff. Running backs coach Frank Falks, who had been with the Buckeyes for two seasons and had ties to Cooper dating back to their days at Arizona State, accepted a similar job with the NFL's San Diego Chargers.

Filling the vacancy created by Falks proved to be an easy task, though. Former OSU running back Tim Spencer had joined the staff the previous year as a volunteer coach while he finished work on his degree, and he made for a seamless transition as Cooper's new running backs coach.



FILE PHOTO

TURNAROUND – Wide receiver Joey Galloway helped the 1994 Buckeyes rebound from a humiliating 63-14 loss to Penn State to beat Michigan for the first time in seven years for coach John Cooper.

More difficult was finding replacements for the 14 starters who had left the program, including defensive tackle "Big Daddy" Dan Wilkinson. Leaving school with two years of eligibility remaining, Wilkinson became the first overall selection in the 1994 NFL draft by the Cincinnati Bengals.

The Buckeyes had also been hit by heavy graduation losses, including 1,000-yard rusher Raymont Harris, all-time sacks leader Jason Simmons, All-Big Ten kicker Tim Williams, all-conference offensive linemen Jason Winrow and Alan Kline, fullback Jeff Cothran and three-quarters of the starting secondary – safeties Chico Nelson and Walter Taylor as well as cornerback Tim Walton.

Ever the optimist, Cooper insisted he was eagerly anticipating the upcoming season.

"Rebuilding?" the coach repeated when a reporter dared utter that word. "Are you kidding me? Sure, we have some big holes to fill, but we're not looking to rebuild. We're looking to reload."

There seemed to be ready-made replacements. Junior tailback Eddie George was ready to take over for Harris, while sophomores Matt Finkes and Mike Vrabel were eager to showcase their pass-rushing talents in the absence of Simmons. Meanwhile, Pace was wowing the coaching staff with his talents. It took only about a week in fall camp before the freshman behemoth rose to the top of the depth chart at left tackle.

One position that remained solid was quarterback, where junior Bobby Hoying had the starting job all to himself after sharing snaps the year before with graduated senior Bret Powers. Hoying had the luxury of throwing to talented wide receiver Joey Galloway, who was receiving some preseason Heisman Trophy mention after a '93 season that included 47 catches for 946 yards and

11 touchdowns.

Speedster Chris Sanders and such young up-and-comers as Terry Glenn, Buster Tillman and Dimitrious Stanley gave Hoying plenty of other targets.

Choppy Start To Season

A recurring theme greeted Cooper as he met with reporters at the annual Big Ten Kickoff Luncheon in August. He was set to begin the 1994 season with only two years remaining on his contract, well aware that a new athletics director would likely be in the mood for a change if the Buckeyes had anything resembling a rebuilding season.

But when asked what would constitute a season good enough to merit an extension for Cooper, Ohio State president Dr. E. Gordon Gee was talking in circles and Geiger wasn't talking at all.

"Those are things that we do not and will not talk about through the press," Gee said. "We have a system in which we agree to evaluate those coaches with multiyear contracts before the final year of those contracts and not before."

The university president had contradicted that policy when men's basketball coach Randy Ayers received an extension following the second of back-to-back Big Ten championships in 1992 despite the fact Ayers had two years to go on his original five-year deal.

Cooper admitted he was not comfortable heading into a season with no more security than he had.

"Do I like it? No, I don't like it, but there's really not much I can do about it," he said. "I learned a long time ago that I can't control those kinds of things. I'm a football coach, and I've been fortunate to have been in this business for 30 years. I'll continue to coach football, and the rest will take care of itself.

"You know how I feel. I would like to coach here for a long, long time. But that is

for someone else to decide.”

While the coach added that he was excited for the 1994 season, no preseason publication picked Ohio State to finish higher than third in the Big Ten, and no national poll had the Buckeyes ranked higher than No. 20. Still, the team put on a rousing performance in the season opener, rolling to a 34-10 victory in the Disneyland Pigskin Classic played in Anaheim, Calif., against a Fresno State team headed for a 5-7-1 finish.

George rushed for a game-high 90 yards and two touchdowns while Galloway electrified the crowd with a 67-yard touchdown reception and an 8-yard scoring run in the third quarter that started as a simple option pitch but turned into a highlight-reel-worthy play when the OSU receiver reversed his field, picked up a block from Hoying and scampered into the end zone.

One week later, any possibility of Galloway staying in the Heisman race came to an end when he admitted to accepting a \$200 loan the preceding January from a Chicago-area financial planner. The team co-captain said he originally accepted the money because he had planned to forgo his final year of eligibility, but when he changed his mind and decided to return to Ohio State for his senior year, he did not repay the money.

Galloway was forced to repay the loan and received a two-game suspension, the first of which was served when the Buckeyes traveled to Seattle to take on No. 25 Washington.

Ohio State lost the opening coin toss to the Huskies, and things went progressively downhill from there. The Buckeyes had fallen behind 22-0 by halftime, Hoying was sacked six times, and Washington's own Heisman hopeful, tailback Napoleon Kaufman, rushed for a career-best 211 yards.

The fact OSU made a game of it in the second half before taking a 25-16 loss did little to quell a new round of criticism coming Cooper's way. It continued the following week when Ohio State committed five turnovers – four fumbles and one interception – and was flagged for nine penalties during a lackluster 27-3 win against a hapless Pittsburgh team on its way to a 3-8 season.

Galloway returned from his brief suspension just in time for another victory against another weak nonconference opponent. Houston, which finished with a 1-9-1 record, surrendered 553 total yards to the Buckeyes during a 52-0 rout.

Armed with a 3-1 record, Ohio State traveled to Northwestern for its Big Ten opener and overcame a sluggish start to squeeze out a 17-15 victory. The underlying current of disdain for Cooper bubbled over as the team left the field at halftime staring at a 9-0 deficit. As the coach was being berated by a fan wearing an Ohio State cap, Cooper reacted by snatching the cap from the fan's head and throwing it to the ground.

When the team returned home the following week and lost a 24-10 decision to Illinois, things got even uglier.

Geiger walked off the field to a repeated chorus of “Time for a change! Time for a change!” but that was mild compared to when Cooper and his son, John Jr., made their way to the locker room. “Gotta go, Johnny boy!” was one of the milder epithets, followed by, “And take your hayseed family with you!” Suffice it to say the woman screaming, “You stink, Cooper!” pretty

much summed up the mood.

Things died down a little over the next two weeks thanks to a couple of easy victories that moved the team to 6-2. George rushed for 219 yards and a touchdown during a 23-7 win at Michigan State, and then Hoying matched a school record by throwing for five touchdowns against Purdue during a 48-14 romp.

But then the roof caved in.

From Rags To Riches

Penn State beat the Buckeyes from pillar to post, piling up 572 yards of total offense during a 63-14 shellacking. The 49-point margin of victory was the most lopsided defeat for OSU since a 58-6 loss to Michigan in 1946, and the 63 points represented the most scored by any opponent since an 86-0 loss to the Wolverines in 1902.

“Right now, I don't think any words can describe how I'm feeling,” OSU co-captain Marlon Kerner said. “It was absolutely embarrassing. They made some nice plays and some great catches out there, but never in my wildest nightmares would I imagine them putting up 63 points. As a defensive player, that's just sickening.”

Sickened even more were fans now openly calling for Cooper's head. Their cause was championed by several members of the media, including longtime Columbus sportscaster Jimmy Crum and BSB publisher Frank Moskowitz, who wrote, “The powers that be at Ohio State need to start making arrangements to make a change and make it as quickly as possible after the end of the season so as not to damage recruiting any more than seven years of repeated humiliation and embarrassment have already done.”

Somehow, Cooper put on a brave face and soldiered on. After being asked if watching film of the Penn State debacle was bothersome, the coach replied, “It was a total team disaster, for goodness' sakes. Nobody wants to play the way we played, I don't care who you're playing. Hell, yes, that bothers you.”

“But I told our squad after the ballgame that the only thing we can do to salvage the kind of year we thought we might have a chance of having is to win out.”

The firestorm continued when the team returned to Columbus from Happy Valley. Salvos came from all corners, including radio talk shows during which fans vented their frustration, many of them calling for Cooper's immediate dismissal. Then there was a story published in the student newspaper, *The Lantern*, quoting an unnamed source close to the program who indicated there was dissension on the team, a lack of leadership and a simmering feud between Cooper and offensive coordinator Joe Hollis over play selection.

Cooper called the reports “completely off-base” and having “absolutely no truth whatsoever,” but he closed the team's practice sessions for the remainder of the season and made a conscious effort at damage control during his weekly radio call-in show.

It marked the beginning of an us-against-the-world mentality, and the Buckeyes responded with relatively easy victories against Wisconsin and Indiana, setting up the traditional regular-season finale against Michigan.

“Have we got something to prove?” OSU junior linebacker Lorenzo Styles said, re-

peating a reporter's question. “Yeah, I guess you could say that. But you can say just about anything about that game. It's just talk, and talk doesn't get it done. We have to take care of business this time. Then we can talk.”

Boastful after five victories and one tie in six games against Cooper, Michigan players were already talking.

Wide receiver Walter Smith, out for most of the season with a knee injury, bluntly told reporters, “We want to get Cooper fired. That's what I want to do. We want to keep beating them and beating them until he's no longer there.”

But the Buckeyes had an ace up their sleeve.

Victory At Long Last

At the behest of Geiger, who thought the program should do more to embrace its storied history, Cooper invited several former players to speak with the team following its daily practice sessions during Michigan week. Bill Willis, Jim Stillwagon, Pete Johnson, Todd Bell and Jeff Logan were among those regaling the players with stories about past victories against “That School Up North.”

Then on the evening before the game, just before the end of the traditional Senior Tackle, former quarterback Rex Kern channeled his innermost Woody, interweaving tales of Chic Harley and Hopalong Cassidy with stories of his own national championship career. When the speech had ended, and an estimated crowd of 20,000 in the Horseshoe had jumped to its feet to roar its approval, Cooper had finally found the antidote to his personal poison.

The next afternoon, the Buckeyes exploded onto the field amid some 300 former Buckeyes – the first-ever Tunnel of Pride – and proceeded to roll to a 22-6 victory against the Wolverines.

“This is the greatest thrill of my life,” said Hoying, who threw for 125 yards and also scored his team's first touchdown on a 4-yard run. “This is one of the reasons why you come to Ohio State. You come here with several goals in mind, and at the top of that list is beating Michigan. The feeling is just indescribable.”

Kerner, who grew up in Columbus and played his high school ball at Brookhaven High School, sat for the longest time at his locker, grinning from ear to ear.

“Every year I've heard the same thing. ‘When are you going to beat Michigan? When are you going to beat Michigan?’ Well, now I've got an answer to that question,” the senior co-captain said. “It was a long time coming, but that makes it just that much sweeter.”

How much did Cooper want the victory? Enough to write the words “Don't endure it, enjoy it!” on a locker room chalkboard before the game, the same chalkboard he then shattered with his fist at halftime as the Buckeyes clung desperately to a 12-3 lead.

After the game, a happy and emotionally drained Cooper told reporters, “It doesn't get any better than this. It's been a long, long time coming, but maybe that's what makes it so special. These players out here and these assistant coaches have worked their butts off for this moment, and I am so proud of them I can't even put it into words.”

“This is one of the biggest wins ever in my coaching career, mainly because they

said we couldn't do it. But we did do it. We worked hard, concentrated hard and got a well-earned victory.”

Even the coach's most vocal detractors couldn't dispute that point, and two weeks later, Geiger announced a five-year contract extension for Cooper. The coach proved to be a shrewd negotiator with his new boss, however. When Geiger originally offered an extension of only two years, Cooper asked for and received permission to talk with LSU about its vacant head coaching position. After LSU athletics director Joe Dean indicated the meeting went well, Geiger upped his offer to five years.

“We're both pretty strong people, and I thought the give and take (of negotiations) was healthy,” Geiger said. “We never had angry words, but we disagreed, so I think this has been a good process and a good opportunity for the athletic director and head football coach to get to know each other better.”

Cooper, who said he talked with LSU only because he owed it to himself, his family and his staff to look into the situation from a financial standpoint, indicated relief that he was staying in Columbus.

“I'm very, very excited about continuing as the head football coach at Ohio State,” he said. “This five-year contract will take me, hopefully, through my retirement. I've been a head football coach for 18 years, and it's been a good ride. Hopefully, this is the last time I'll have to negotiate a contract.”

Unfortunately for Cooper, his team could not sustain the momentum it had built at the end of the regular season and lost another bowl game, this one a 24-17 decision to Alabama in the Florida Citrus Bowl. Crimson Tide running back Sherman Williams was a one-man wrecking crew against the Buckeyes, rushing for 166 yards and catching eight passes for 155 yards, including the game-winning 50-yard touchdown pass with 42 seconds left.

Ohio State finished the 1994 season with a 9-4 record and second-place finish in the Big Ten standings, a showing that did little to portend the four-year streak of excellence that was about to follow.

“Looking back, I don't think Coach Cooper gets the credit he deserves for all of the good things that happened during his tenure,” Park said. “But in particular, he doesn't get credit for what happened after that loss to Penn State in 1994. There are a lot of other coaches who would have lost their team after a loss like that, but he somehow kept things together, and that game wound up being sort of a launching pad for the next couple of years.”

After the loss at Penn State in 1994, the Buckeyes won 46 of their next 54 games, including a 15-6 record against ranked teams. They also won Big Ten championships and finished No. 2 in the national rankings in 1996 and 1998, and they went to Pasadena following the '96 season to capture the program's first Rose Bowl victory in 23 years.

Also during the four-year period between 1995 and 1998, the Buckeyes boasted 30 first-team All-Big Ten players as well as 14 others who were named first-team All-Americans, including George, who ran away with the Heisman Trophy in 1995.

“We're proud of all the teams we coached here,” Cooper said, “but that bunch in '94 that came back from where it was at the end of October to do what they did later on, well, they'll always be just a little extra-special.”

Visitors Overflow 'Shoe For Rivalry Game

As is always the case when Ohio State and Michigan face off, recruits try to get on campus to take in the environment of the rivalry, and it was no different this year. There were many highly ranked high school players on campus for the Buckeyes, both committed and uncommitted.

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Greg Wilson

It was the busiest weekend of the season in terms of recruiting, with the prospects all getting to take in a 13-10 Ohio State loss to the Wolverines.

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

Committed prospects who were in Columbus were Vero Beach, Fla., four-star linebacker Tarvos Alford (6-2, 210); 2027 commit Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne five-star wide receiver Jamier Brown (5-11, 170); Newberry, Fla., four-star defensive lineman Jarquez Carter (6-2, 284); Westerville (Ohio) North three-star interior offensive lineman Jake Cook (6-5, 295); Enterprise, Ala., four-star defensive end Zion Grady (6-4, 235); Cleveland St. Ignatius three-star safety Cody Haddad (6-1, 175); 2026 commit Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star wide receiver Chris Henry Jr. (6-5, 205); Cleveland Villa Angela-St. Joseph four-star running back Bo Jackson (6-0, 205); Akron Hoban three-star linebacker Eli Lee (6-3, 230); Gates Mills (Ohio) Gilmour Academy four-star tight end Brody Lennon (6-4, 220); Toledo Whitmer four-star offensive tackle Carter Lowe (6-5, 290); Ontario, Ohio, four-star wide receiver Bodpegn Miller (6-4, 180); Matthews (N.C.) Weddington four-star defensive lineman Trajen Odom (6-4, 285); Birmingham (Ala.) Parker five-star cornerback Na'eem Offord (6-1, 185); McKinney, Texas, four-star linebacker Riley Pettijohn (6-2, 215); Oradell (N.J.) Bergen Catholic four-star

wide receiver Quincy Porter (6-3, 190); 2026 commit Pataskala (Ohio) Watkins Memorial three-star wide receiver Jaeden Ricketts (6-0, 187); Houston North Shore five-star cornerback Devin Sanchez (6-2, 170); and Bellefontaine, Ohio, five-star quarterback Tavien St. Clair (6-4, 225).

Porter has been one of multiple flip candidates for the Buckeyes, with Penn State going after him recently, but he told 247Sports that he is locked in with Ohio State and is planning to sign with the Buckeyes when the early signing period arrives.

"I am signing with Ohio State," Porter said. "I haven't signed anything yet because (it is not time), but I am signing with Ohio State on Dec. 4."

Other 2025 prospects who were on campus for the game were Byesville (Ohio) Meadowbrook offensive tackle Mitchell George (6-6, 285) and Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star defensive end and UCLA commit Epi Sitanilei (6-5, 220).

There was also a large group of 2026 visitors on campus, including Pompano Beach (Fla.) Monarch four-star wide receiver Jabari Brady (6-2, 195); Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School four-star safety Simeon Caldwell (6-3, 185); Buriem (Wash.) Kennedy Catholic four-star defensive end Derek Colman-Brusa (6-4, 230); Matthews (N.C.) Weddington four-star linebacker and Notre Dame commit Thomas Davis Jr. (6-2, 205); Upper Marlboro (Md.) St. Frances Academy four-star safety Jireh Edwards (6-1, 194); Lexington, Ohio, four-star tight end Brayden Fogle (6-3, 225); Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star safety Zech Fort (5-10, 190); Lewis Center (Ohio) Olentangy three-star safety Kaden Gebhardt (6-2, 200); Harbor City (Calif.) Narbonne four-star linebacker Kenneth Goodwin (6-1, 205); Richmond (Va.) St. Christopher's School four-star interior offensive lineman Darius Gray (6-3, 277); Akron Hoban four-star offensive tackle Sam Greer (6-7, 310); Washington Court House (Ohio) Miami Trace four-star offensive tackle Adam Guthrie (6-7, 285); Rochester (N.Y.) four-star wide receiver Messiah Hampton (6-0, 170); brothers from Matthews (N.C.) Weddington,

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
Jayvon McFadden	IOL	6-5	300	★★★★	Upper Marlboro (Md.) Riverdale Baptist
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
Jordyn Woods	CB	6-3	175	★★★	Cartersville, Ga.

Aiden Harris (6-3, 240) and Andrew Harris (6-2, 235), both four-star defensive linemen; Akron Hoban five-star cornerback Elbert Hill (5-10, 175); Cleveland Glenville four-star linebacker Cincere Johnson (6-3, 225); Charlotte (N.C.) Myers Park four-star wide receiver Brody Keefe (6-3, 185); Brunswick, Ga., four-star offensive tackle Heze Kent (6-5, 300); Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star defensive end Jake Kreul (6-3, 230); Mansfield (Texas) Lake Ridge four-star offensive tackle Felix Ojo (6-6, 285); Cincinnati Moeller three-star quarterback Matt Ponatoski (6-2, 190); Purcellville (Va.) Woodgrove four-star wide receiver Connor Salmin (6-1, 190); Lewis Center (Ohio) Olentangy three-star linebacker CJ Sanna (6-3, 225); Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star defensive end Shaun Scott (6-3, 230); Avon, Ohio, four-star athlete Jakob Weatherspoon (5-10, 172); and Flowood (Miss.) Hartfield Academy five-star safety

Bralan Womack (5-11, 185).

There were also multiple 2027 prospects who made the trip to campus, including Norwalk, Iowa, tight end Luke Brewer (6-4, 210); Cleveland Glenville athlete DeAnthony Crittenden (5-10, 160); Huntington Beach, Calif., five-star quarterback Brady Edmunds (6-5, 215); Perrysburg, Ohio, offensive tackle Reed Gerken (6-5, 290); Harper Woods, Mich., five-star wide receiver Dakota Guerrant (6-1, 185); Severn (Md.) Archbishop Spalding four-star wide receiver Myles McAfee (5-11, 165); Pittsburgh Aliquippa cornerback Larry Moon III (5-11, 170); and Cleveland Villa Angela-St. Joseph tight end D'Angelo White (6-5, 235).

Edmunds – the nation's 10th-best prospect and No. 2-ranked quarterback – has said that he wants to make his decision by the end of this year, and he recently received a "Crystal Ball" from 247Sports' Bill Kurelic, who predicted the five-star would commit to Ohio State, which has been one of his four top teams along with Michigan, Penn State and Texas. It was also predicted by Blair Angulo in September and Greg Biggins in August – both of 247Sports as well – that Edmunds would commit to the Buckeyes.

There were 2028 prospects in attendance for The Game, with Miami Ransom Everglades School quarterback Neimann Lawrence (6-1, 195) and Danvers (Mass.) St. John's Prep quarterback Christopher Vargas (6-4, 175) both making the trip to Columbus.

Four-Star DE Merritt Decommits From OSU

Ohio State lost another defensive end from its 2025 class when Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star London Merritt (6-3, 250) decommitted from the Buckeyes on Nov. 26 and pledged his services to Colorado and head coach Deion Sanders two days later on Nov. 28.

Merritt, the No. 144 overall prospect and No. 13 defensive end, originally committed to OSU on March 26 but since then had been on official visits to North Carolina and most

ASK AN ANALYST with Garrick Hodge of Eleven Warriors

Ohio State is making another run at Charlotte, (N.C.) Providence Day School five-star offensive tackle and Tennessee commit David Sanders (6-6, 290) after missing out on him when he committed to Tennessee in the summer. What are the Buckeyes' chances to flip him at this point?

"I'd say at least 50-50. We'll see how things shake out, and there's only a few days until National Signing Day. He wouldn't have made the visit to Ohio Stadium last week if he wasn't actively considering flipping to the Buckeyes. But he's been pretty locked into Tennessee for the majority of the fall. This one is definitely intriguing, though."

OSU got its first 2027 commitment from Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne five-star wide receiver Jamier Brown (5-11, 170). Have you been able to see him play, and what do you make of him as a prospect?

"I saw him camp in June, and the speed is definitely noticeable. He's one of the fastest athletes in Ohio, and his track times will definitely back that claim up. He's likely going to be one of the best if not the best receiver in the 2027 class, so naturally Brian Hartline already snagged him. If we don't count Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star wide receiver and Ohio State commit Chris Henry Jr (6-5, 205) as an Ohio prospect, Brown might be the best in-state wide receiver we've seen in a while, maybe since Ted Ginn Jr."

With the early signing period coming up right after the Michigan game, who are some players you think OSU has a chance to successfully flip by Dec. 4?

"The names I'm looking at are Gaithersburg (Md.) Quince Orchard three-star cornerback Aydan West (6-0, 184) and Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star defensive end Epi Sitanilei (6-5, 220). West will have to be flipped from Michigan State and Sitanilei from UCLA, but if the Buckeyes push hard for both, I think they have a good chance of getting it done. Montgomery (Ala.) Carver four-star running back Anthony Rogers (5-8, 190) has already decommitted from Alabama, but I think OSU has a great chance of landing him on National Signing Day, too."

Who are the players currently in Ohio State's class that you are expecting to flip away from the Buckeyes?

"Two of them are already gone, Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star defensive end London Merritt (6-3, 250) and Philadelphia Imhotep Institute four-star defensive end Zahir Mathis (6-6, 225). The other one I'd be worried about is Birmingham (Ala.) Parker five-star cornerback Na'eem Offord (6-1, 185), who has openly flirted with Auburn and Oregon this fall. He'll make a final decision on his recruitment on Wednesday, but I'd be a little concerned if I were OSU. Vero Beach, Fla., four-star linebacker Tarvos Alford (6-2, 210) has had some smoke to Miami too, but I'm sensing some renewed optimism from OSU's end that the Buckeyes can keep him."

OSU Football 2026 Commitments

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
Corbyn Fordham	TE	6-4	215	★★★★	Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School
Chris Henry Jr.	WR	6-5	205	★★★★★	Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei
Jaeden Ricketts	WR	6-0	187	NA	Pataskala (Ohio) Watkins Memorial

recently Colorado on Oct. 11.

This news comes just over a week after Philadelphia Imhotep Institute four-star defensive end Zahir Mathis (6-6, 225) decommitted from Ohio State as well, leaving just four committed defensive linemen in its 2025 class – Grady, Carter, Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep four-star defensive lineman Maxwell Roy (6-3, 285) and Odom.

The Buckeyes are not done recruiting on the defensive line, however, and still hope to land New Orleans Edna Karr five-star defensive lineman Jahkeem Stewart (6-6, 270), who reclassified to the 2025 class earlier this fall and plans to enroll early. The nation's 16th-best prospect and third-best defensive lineman is currently deciding between Ohio State, Oregon and LSU, and with the early signing period starting on Dec. 4, he will likely decide soon.

Ohio State is also still going after Penn State commit Warren (Ohio) Warren G. Harding four-star defensive end Chaz Coleman (6-5, 225) along with Sitanilei.

Three-Star CB Woods Flips To OSU

The Buckeyes' loss of Merritt came the day after they added another prospect on the defensive side of the ball. They were able to flip former Cincinnati commit and Cartersville, Ga., three-star cornerback Jordyn Woods (6-3, 175), who committed to Tim Walton and Ohio State on Nov. 25.

The pursuit of Woods – the nation's 1,275th-best prospect and No. 117 cornerback in the 2025 class – lasted just under a month, dating back to Oct. 26 when the Buckeyes hosted him for a visit for the 21-17 win over Nebraska then offered him a scholarship on Nov. 3. He didn't take long to make an official visit to Columbus, doing so for the Nov. 23 matchup against Indiana, watching the Buckeyes beat the No. 5 Hoosiers 38-15.

The visit must have gone well because he took just two more days to decommit from the Bearcats and pledge his services to the Buckeyes. He had been committed to Cincinnati since June 25.

It still remains a possibility that Offord could flip to either Auburn or Oregon, but he wasn't expected to make his final decision until Dec. 4, so the Buckeyes could still look to add another cornerback in the class. They have been targeting multiple other flip candidates, such as Gaithersburg (Md.) Quince Orchard three-star cornerback Aydan West (6-0, 184), who is currently committed to Michigan State and visited Columbus for the win over Indiana.

2026 Four-Star TE Fordham Commits To OSU

The Buckeyes secured their third commitment in the 2026 class on Thanksgiving Day when Jacksonville (Fla.) The Bolles School four-star tight end Corbyn Fordham (6-4, 215) pledged his services to Ohio State.

He joins Henry and Ricketts in the 2026 class.

Fordham is the No. 322 player in the cycle and the No. 15 tight end, and he pledges to

the Buckeyes after originally being offered in May, returning to Columbus in June for a recruiting camp where he impressed tight ends coach Keenan Bailey. He has caught 22 passes for 226 yards and four touchdowns in his junior season.

Fordham was joined by two of his 2025 classmates when he last visited Ohio State, both of whom the Buckeyes are still interested in. Those two are four-star wide receiver Naeem Burroughs (5-11, 160) and Caldwell, the nation's 59th- and 70th-best players in the nation, respectively.

St. Clair, Miller Ohio Mr. Football Finalists

Two 2025 Ohio State football commits were named finalists for Ohio's Mr. Football award on Nov. 27, with St. Clair and Miller both being named among the eight who earned the distinction.

St. Clair finished his high school career in the first round of the OHSAA playoffs and ended the season 166 of 244 passing for 2,536 yards and 29 touchdowns with 254 rushing yards and nine touchdowns on the ground.

Miller has been at quarterback for his high school team and completed 149 of 253 passes for 2,216 yards and 20 touchdowns while also rushing for 1,988 yards and 21 touchdowns on the ground this season.

St. Clair was the earliest commitment in the Buckeyes' 2025 class, pledging his services to Ryan Day on June 21, 2023, and trying to help with recruiting his class and coming to every home Buckeye game since then.

Miller has been committed to Ohio State since June 21, exactly a year after St. Clair did, and has shot up the rankings since he pledged his services, now up to the No. 292 overall player in the country and the No. 8 player in the state of Ohio.

The winner of Ohio's Mr. Football award will be announced at the Ohio high school football state championships on Dec. 6, two days after both are expected to sign with the Buckeyes during the early signing period.

OSU Commit Grady Gets All-American Bowl Invite

Another one of Ohio State's 2025 commitments was recognized as one of the best players in the country when Grady was given a Navy All-American Bowl jersey.

"It means a lot to me," Grady told 247Sports. "It's great to know all of my hard work paid off. I'm doing good. I just need to stay on track."

Grady was set to sign with the Buckeyes on Dec. 4, but before he comes to campus he will compete in the national event with a total of 100 of the best high school players in the country along with many of his future Buckeye teammates.

With so little time left before he begins his Ohio State career, the No. 71 overall prospect in the country is ready to get to Columbus.

"I'm very fired up," he said. "I'm fired up to get there and get to work and be a Buckeye."

But Grady isn't just preparing to join the program, he's also trying to help make the

OSU Football 2027 Commitment

Player(s) in the class of 2027 who have issued a verbal commitment to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Jamier Brown	WR	5-11	170	★★★★★	Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne

2025 Buckeye class get better.

"I'm trying to get Anthony Rogers to come on up," he said.

Rogers, a four-star running back from Montgomery (Ala.) Carver, decommitted from Alabama on Nov. 17, just over a week after he made an official visit to Columbus. He said that he would decide between Ohio State and Georgia on Dec. 4. If he does sign with the Buckeyes, that would give the class three running backs along with Jackson and Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep three-star Isaiah West (5-11, 208).

Day Talks Early Signing Period

December can be an extremely busy month for college head coaches, especially in recent years. With the season reaching the postseason, conference championships and the College Football Playoff taking place throughout the month, the transfer portal opening (Dec. 9 this year) and now the early signing period, coaches have quite a bit to think about.

Over the offseason, the early signing period was moved up even earlier in the month of December than it had been before, with this year's date coming on Dec. 4, the week after Ohio State plays Michigan, after it opened on Dec. 20 in 2023. Maybe now that the Buckeyes lost to the Wolverines, there will be more time for Day and his assistant coaches to focus on retaining and flipping prospects, but

it is still an extremely busy time of the year, even if they aren't in the Big Ten title game.

Day talked in his weekly press conference on Nov. 26 about what he thinks about the early signing period being when it is.

"We say this all the time, but it's just changing so much. This is probably the most unstable it's ever been in recruiting. I think it's fair to say," Day said. "There's just so much going on, there's so many variables in place. Based on when signing day is right now – there's just no good answer, and I get it. I understand why the decisions have been made to do it right now, but we're so focused right now on winning (against Michigan), it's hard to think about anything else or take any time to do anything other than focus on the game."

Luckily for Day, most of the prep players who had committed to Ohio State in the 2025 class seemed committed to the Buckeyes and were unlikely to flip in the few days remaining before they were supposed to sign. But there are some prospects – like Alford, Carter and Offord – who have been exploring other options and might find a lack of communication from the Buckeyes off-putting.

With all of this in mind, Day said he isn't letting the fact that he has to do so much work get to him, and he is still trying to get everything done.

"You still have to recruit," he said. "You still have to make sure you're getting yourself

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Buckeye Sports BulletinBoard

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BUCKEYE GAMEDAY Memories: A new book of short stories about humorous gameday experiences in the 1960s through the 2010s by Tim Sullivan. Available on Amazon.com.

FOR SALE: OSU football programs including bowl games, national playoff and championship games. OSU basketball pro-

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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.

FOR SALE — OSU-MICHIGAN Game, 1975 - original RADIO broadcast on CD! Woody's last great team & Archie's last UM game as Bucks go 11-0! Three-disk set runs 3½ hours! Listen in your car! \$25 + \$3 S & H. Call 1-630-527-8890!

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Earlier Signing Day Creates Chaos For Coaches

Continued From Page 23

ready for the recruiting class and for signing day. And then you have the portal, it's opening up. There's also going to have to be decisions made on the recruiting side, and also on our side on how we're going to put this roster together over the next month. I feel really good about the class that's committed to us and where we're headed on signing day."

Day also reiterated that recruiting a good class isn't the only thing coaches get judged on due to the transfer portal.

"Signing day (used to be) like, the No. 1, the No. 2, the No. 3 recruiting class in the country and all of these different rankings," he said. "Now with portal retention, when it comes to roster management, it's very different than it used to be. We've got to do what's best for Ohio State and make sure our roster is right for next year."

There has been some talk about moving the early signing period up even further, possibly into the summer months before high

school players go through their senior season, but Day said that high school coaches had issues with that timing.

"I was part of those conversations in trying to move it up as much as we possibly could," Day said. "The feedback from the high school coaches was that maybe players would start opting out (of their high school seasons) because they signed early."

"But I know this: For us as coaches to be thinking about all of these things right now is just crazy. We've got to come up with a solution so that it's not as chaotic this time of year."

State Finals On Deck For OSU Commits, Targets

Division II – Akron Hoban (12-2) at Avon (14-0): Lee, Hill and Greer faced off against Weatherspoon in the state semifinals, and Weatherspoon and Avon came out on top 35-10 over Akron Archbishop Hoban, the Eagles still holding onto their perfect record going into the state championship game. They

will face off against Cincinnati Anderson in the finals.

Division III – Toledo Central Catholic (12-1) at Youngstown Ursuline (13-1): Four-star cornerback Victor Singleton (6-0, 160), a 2026 target for the Buckeyes, moved on to the championship, beating Ursuline in a 7-6 defensive battle in the semifinals. The Fighting Irish will face off against Columbus Bishop Watterson in the state finals on Dec. 6.

Division IV – Cleveland Glenville (11-4) at Sandusky Perkins (13-1): Johnson, another 2026 target for the Buckeyes, saw his season come to an end against Perkins in a 13-11 loss. Johnson recently received a "Crystal Ball" from 247Sports' Bill Kurelic to land at Ohio State and was at the Buckeyes' game the day after the loss.

Other Notes And Tidbits

• Brady, who was on campus for the rivalry game, narrowed his scholarship list down to 10 teams, including Alabama, Florida, Flori-

da State, LSU, Miami (Fla.), Missouri, Ohio State, Ole Miss, Oregon and Texas A&M. He is considered the No. 46 overall player in the 2026 class and the No. 6 wide receiver and currently holds 36 Division I scholarship offers.

• After receiving some very good quarterback news recently with Belleville, Mich., five-star quarterback Bryce Underwood (6-4, 205) flipping from LSU to Michigan on Nov. 21, the Wolverines were on the other side of another quarterback flip on Nov. 29 when Co-coa, Fla., four-star quarterback Brady Hart (6-4, 180) reclassified to the 2025 class and committed to Texas A&M. If Underwood is as good as advertised, Hart leaving the 2026 class likely won't upset Michigan fans too much. He is the No. 391 player in the class and the No. 27 quarterback.

For the latest in Ohio State football recruiting news, be sure to visit BuckeyeSports.com, available for free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

35 Years Ago — 1989

Because of a friendship struck between a pair of baseball players, Ohio State was in the running to land one of the premier football players in the United States.

Chris Weinke of Cretin-Derham Hall High School in St. Paul, Minn., was generally considered the best drop-back passing prospect in the country.

But he was also an accomplished baseball player and became friends with Ohio State pitcher Scott Kligenbeck while both were playing for Team USA in the Junior Olympics.

Kligenbeck, who had signed with the Buckeyes the previous spring, talked so favorably about Ohio State that Weinke became interested.

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

Still, with Weinke's reputation, the Buckeyes had to stand in a long line and hope that he would visit the campus in Columbus.

30 Years Ago — 1994

When John Cooper was hired as head coach at Ohio State, one of the statements he made at his first press conference was that he took the job because he could recruit from his own front porch.

Ohio had been and still was one of the top producers of Division I talent in the nation. It was especially true in the Big Ten, where two dozen players were signed the year before by conference teams and more than 150 Ohio players competed every week.

Cooper had made it a practice to make a heavy concentration on his team's home state, but he had also expanded the Buckeyes' recruiting into such states as Florida, New Jersey and Illinois.

In fact, since he'd been head coach at OSU, Cooper had signed 90 players from Ohio and 58 from other states.

Again in 1994, the Buckeyes were charting the progress of several outstanding out-of-state prospects such as receiver Randy Moss of Belle (W.Va.) DuPont, quarterback Bobby Sabelhaus of Owings Mills (Md.) McDonogh and running back Bennie Butler of Del City, Okla., just to name a few.

Some folks continued to argue, though, that you could still make a pretty good Big Ten team just out of Ohio prospects.

25 Years Ago — 1999

Ohio State's 2000 recruiting class increased to 14 verbal commitments on Nov. 16 when Freehold (N.J.) Boro linebacker Darrell Reid issued his commitment. Reid (6-3, 240) told SuperPrep prior to the season that he would commit if Ohio State, his longtime favorite, ever offered.

But the Buckeyes showed only lukewarm interest until assistant Shawn Simms called Reid on Nov. 8 to see whether Reid would be available to make an official visit for the Illinois weekend on Nov. 13.

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

Reid said he enjoyed the visit immensely.

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

20 Years Ago — 2004

Following Ohio State's rousing 37-21 defeat of Michigan on Nov. 20, Buckeye cornerback Ashton Youboty recalled that he began to fully understand the depth of the OSU-Michigan rivalry after taking his official visit to Columbus for the 2002 installment of The Game.

Less than a month after taking in the Buckeyes' Fiesta Bowl-clinching 14-9 victory over the Wolverines, Youboty issued his verbal commitment to the Ohio State coaches. The staff was hoping to have similar success after the 2004 victory.

Among the 105,456 who made up the second-largest crowd in Ohio Stadium history were a number of prospective recruits, including a trio of Floridians making their official visits to the campus.

The most highly rated of that group was Jacksonville Sandalwood running back Maurice Wells (5-9, 180), ranked by Rivals.com as the nation's No. 3 all-purpose back and No. 65 overall player.

He was joined by Pompano Beach Blanche Ely offensive lineman Ronnie Wilson (6-4, 331), who had been to OSU unofficially already that season, and Fort Lauderdale Dillard linebacker Elijah Hodge (6-1, 200).

15 Years Ago — 2009

Entering the 2009 installment of the annual clash with its primary rival having won seven of the last eight contests would seem to have generated some recruiting momentum in favor of Ohio State.

Four days before kickoff, however, both Jim Tressel and Rich Rodriguez downplayed the suggestion that winning their annual rivalry game impacted either school's recruiting effort – even when the schools went head-to-head against each other for the same player.

"I don't think it makes that much of an impact," Rodriguez said. "When you recruit against someone, you want to be able to sell success and those things, but more than anything you're selling your university and all the things that the school is about (as well as) their role and their role in the system and how they fit."

"With some recruits, I think it makes a difference, but I think the majority of them are picking the institution for different reasons like the relationship with the staff and those things."

Tressel agreed, adding that winning doesn't hurt the cause.

"I'm not sure that wins and losses have as high an impact with kids as much as the comfort levels and sometimes proximity or maybe the opportunity to play according to how many of this position or that position you have," he said. "However, you certainly would rather be victorious in your games than not."

10 Years Ago — 2014

Given that he played at a position of need, there was a chance that Pickerington (Ohio) Central three-star defensive lineman DaVon Hamilton (6-3, 285) would come away with an offer before all was said and done.

However, Hamilton would likely have to wait for it. While visiting for the Ohio State-Michigan game, he spoke with defensive coordinator Luke Fickell and defensive line coach Larry Johnson about the prospect of him becoming a Buckeye.

"I did speak with Coach Fickell and Coach Johnson, and they were great to talk to," Hamilton said. "What they want me to do is come back to campus to speak more with the coaches and talk to the academic people. Then they want me to come on an official visit, but that has not been set up yet."

"I will probably go over there to meet with everyone and also stay and watch practice. Ohio State is obviously very high on my list, and I'm looking forward to continuing this process with them."

Five Years Ago — 2019

On Nov. 26, Ohio State three-star athlete commit Cameron Martinez was named the Michigan High School Player of the Year, becoming the first athlete to win the award in back-to-back seasons in its seven-year history. He received 54 of the 67 votes from coaches and media.

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

However, Martinez's high school career came to a disappointing close on Nov. 30 with a 30-7 loss to River Rouge at Detroit's Ford Field.

Though he did score the Big Red's lone touchdown, Martinez was limited to 108 yards on 34 carries and was sacked five times.

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

One Year Ago — 2023

Ohio State earned a pledge on Nov. 23, adding a verbal commitment from Coopersville, Mich., three-star offensive lineman Gabe VanSickle (6-5, 283).

VanSickle was the No. 613 overall prospect and No. 41 interior lineman in 2024, and he held additional offers from Bowling Green, Central Michigan, Indiana and Northwestern, among others. He had been committed to the Wildcats since May 2023 but backed off his pledge on Nov. 21, just days before flipping to Ohio State.

VanSickle visited for Ohio State's win over Penn State on Oct. 21 and was then offered on Nov. 7, and he followed that up with a visit for the win over Michigan State on Nov. 11.

He was the fourth commitment on the offensive line for Ohio State, joining four-star offensive linemen Devontae (6-5, 297) and Deontae (6-6, 280) Armstrong from Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward and New Palestine, Ind., four-star Ian Moore (6-5, 295).

Moore and Deontae Armstrong were considered tackle prospects for Ohio State, while Devontae Armstrong and VanSickle were expected to play in the interior once they arrived.

Season Not Going As Planned For Former Bucks

By **CRAIG MERZ**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When Buckeye Sports Bulletin started profiling Ohio State players in the NFL in September 2021, the Cincinnati Bengals were an obvious choice.

First, the proximity to Columbus and a strong base made them a natural. But wait. What about the Cleveland Browns? True, but the Bengals were OSU South with numerous players associated with the program, more so than the Browns.

All told, the Bengals started that season with seven players who spent all or part of their careers with the Buckeyes.

Topping the list was Joe Burrow, who graduated from Ohio State in three years but didn't have on-field success until transferring to LSU and in his second season with the Tigers led them to the national title while winning the Heisman Trophy in 2019. Still, OSU fans like to claim Burrow as their own.

He was joined on the Cincinnati roster by linebacker Keandre Jones, a Buckeye teammate of Burrow in 2016 and '17 before he finished his career at Maryland, and defensive end Noah Spence, who ended up at Eastern Kentucky after two seasons at OSU.

Then there were Bengals who stayed Buckeyes: cornerback Eli Apple, safety Vonn Bell, defensive end Sam Hubbard and offensive tackle Isaiah Prince.

At one point in the preseason there were three other Buckeyes on the roster to bring the total to 10, but center/guard Billy Price was traded to the New York Giants while offensive lineman Michael Jordan and punter Druie Chrisman were cut.

Why the history lesson?

Only Bell, Burrow and Hubbard remain in 2024 as the Bengals struggle to remain relevant in the AFC playoff chase. Cincinnati is now 4-8 on the year after a 44-38 loss to the Pittsburgh Steelers on Dec. 1.

Toll On Bell

That's not what Bell, who turns 30 on Dec. 12, expected when he rejoined the Bengals this season. He signed a three-year, \$22.5 million contract with the Carolina Panthers as a free agent in 2023 but was cut after one season before signing with Cincinnati at the veteran minimum of \$1.2 million in March.

"What did I come back here for?" he told ESPN on Nov. 25.

Bell has been splitting time with second-year player Jordan Battle as questions arise if Father Time has caught up to him.

Bengals defensive coordinator Lou Anarumo badly wanted to reacquire Bell in the offseason after the pair had worked together for three seasons prior to Bell's departure to Carolina.

"The former Ohio State Buckeye was a pillar of consistency and intellect in the Bengals' scheme that stifled elite quarterbacks for back-to-back deep playoff runs," John Sheeran of A to Z Sports wrote on Oct. 1. "It's very possible that Bell is not that player anymore. If that's the case, the person who needs to realize it first is his DC."

He went on to add that Bell was "starting to look like a shell of his former self" and, "When you catch yourself flat-footed in the face of a routine tackle, questions will naturally start to arise. ... Bringing him back for a veteran-minimum deal after a lost year with the Panthers was supposed to be putting a lost puzzle piece back into the same slot it was before. It's entirely possible this puzzle piece doesn't quite fit the same as it used to."

Sheeran feels Battle's time has come:

"Inserting Battle for Bell needs to be an option on the table. Stopping the run is arguably Cincinnati's biggest issue, and that was Battle's biggest strength as a rookie. He's learning the mental side of the job thanks to Bell's leadership, but he can't return the favor via transferring his youthful vigor."

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

"He's just a really, really good communicator," safeties coach Jordan Kovacs said of Bell in May. "It's second nature to him."

Added Anarumo at the time, "He's a calming factor for our defense. He knows the issues that can arise in maybe a certain call or play and can try to stay ahead of that before it ever happens."

It hasn't been all bad for Bell. He had his first interception of the season Sept. 29 against Carolina. It was the eighth pick of his career and his first since Week 2 of the 2023 season.

Battling Through

Bell, Burrow and Hubbard were among eight captains for the Bengals the weekend of Dec. 1.

Like Bell, Hubbard has struggled, but his issues have been due to injuries the past two seasons. The 29-year-old, who is signed through 2025 with a \$11.1 million cap hit the final season, had reconstructive surgery on his right ankle after the 2023 season.

He sustained the injury during a Week 9 game against the Buffalo Bills and sat the next two games before returning to play the final seven games.

Hubbard admittedly was not the same player after the injury.

"I kind of wanted to just be out there and was doing the best I could," he said in July. "I did want to burn that film from the back half of the year, but I'm going to get back to my old self. I've got a long offseason of work ahead, and I'm excited to be back with the guys."

As optimistic as he was, Hubbard was felled by a knee injury during training camp that forced him to sit the entire preseason. Sometime during the rehab, he incurred another injury.

"It was a Grade 3 hamstring tear that I could have operated on and missed the season, or rested about six weeks and played through," Hubbard told TV station WLWT in mid-November. "I knew it was going to be something that lingered through the year, but they told me I would be able to work through it. Ten games later, I'm finally feeling pretty good."

Hubbard has played only 63 percent of the defensive snaps, his lowest total since his rookie season. Despite the setbacks, he

got his first sack of the season against Baltimore on Oct. 6 and his first career interception vs. Cleveland on Oct. 20.

He is used to playing at a high level since his days at Cincinnati Moeller when he helped the Crusaders to state titles in his junior (2012) and senior (2013) seasons.

Hubbard originally committed to play lacrosse at Notre Dame but changed his mind at the persuasion of then-Ohio State coach Urban Meyer, who first saw him playing dodge ball in a gym class.

During Hubbard's redshirt freshman year, the Buckeyes won the 2014 national championship, beating Oregon in the inaugural College Football playoff title game. Over his next three seasons he played in 40 games, making 22 starts, before becoming a third-round (77th overall) draftee by the Bengals in 2018.

Hubbard played in all 16 games his rookie season with a highlight being a 19-yard scoop-and-score of Miami quarterback Ryan Tannehill's fumble late in the fourth quarter to give the Bengals a two-touchdown lead and eventual 27-17 win on Oct. 7, 2018.

That was among his most memorable moments until the AFC championship game in the 2021 season when the Kansas City Chiefs were in a goal-to-go situation late in the game. A touchdown would have given KC the lead, but on second and third downs, Hubbard sacked Patrick Mahomes, forcing the Chiefs to kick the tying field goal.

The game went to overtime, and the Bengals won 27-24 for their trip to the Super Bowl.

In the 2022 wild card against Baltimore, his midair fumble recovery for a touchdown against the Ravens is known as the "Fumble in the Jungle."

The score was tied 17-17, and the Ravens were driving for the go-ahead score in the fourth quarter when quarterback Tyler Huntley on third-and-goal from the 1 tried to stretch across the goal line with the ball in hand. Bengals linebacker Logan Wilson poked the ball away, Hubbard scooped it up and ran 98 yards for the longest fumble recovery for a touchdown in NFL playoff history.

The 14-point swing gave Cincinnati a 24-17 lead with 11:39 left in regulation, and that's how it remained.

Not His Fault

There will likely be no postseason appearance for the Bengals, but Burrow has been trying his best to make the season re-

spectable.

In consecutive weeks, the Bengals lost 34-27 to the Los Angeles Chargers and 35-34 to the Ravens to fall to 4-7.

According to Opta STATS, Burrow was the first quarterback in NFL history to throw for 300-plus yards with three TDs and no interceptions in back-to-back games but lose both in regulation. Crazy as it sounds, it was the third time this season he had those numbers in a game and lost.

Burrow has 30 TD passes and just five interceptions and is on pace for about 4,600 yards with 42 touchdowns and six interceptions.

His 21 career games with three or more passing touchdowns are tied for the third most in NFL history in a quarterback's first five seasons, trailing Dan Marino (33) and Mahomes (28).

Dallas Cowboys linebacker Micah Parsons on his podcast "The Edge with Micah Parsons" spoke highly of Burrow: "Say they were 7-3. Joe Burrow would probably be the MVP right now."

Steelers coach Mike Tomlin had similar thoughts.

"If you look at the tape, he's MVP-caliber in terms of what he's doing for them," he said. "I started with the two Baltimore games because of the intimacy of divisional play. Man, I don't know how many touchdowns he threw in those two football games. I know (Ja'Marr) Chase himself had five. It's just kind of reflective of what he and they are capable of."

Help On The Way?

Surprisingly, the last Buckeye drafted by the Bengals was offensive lineman Michael Jordan in 2019.

That could change according to the latest A to Z Sports 2025 mock draft, which suggests wide receiver Emeka Egbuka for the 11th overall pick.

"If the Bengals move on from Tee Higgins, then they'll need to find a special replacement right away to help Joe Burrow," the story said. "Emeka Egbuka is an elite talent at wide receiver who just sometimes gets overshadowed because of the other talented players around him."

At No. 43, defensive end Tyleik Williams would be a perfect fit, the article said: "With how strong Williams is, some people might underrate the explosiveness that he brings to the table. His first step is surprisingly fast, which allows Williams to create a ton of power in tight windows. Once he gets his momentum rolling, it's over."

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B1G Championship Game Matchup Set

After the weekend of Nov. 16, Oregon had just one game remaining on its regular-season schedule and had officially clinched a spot in the Big Ten Championship Game in its first season in the conference, and with Ohio State's 13-10 loss to Michigan on Nov. 30, the Buckeyes threw away their chances at a rematch against the Ducks in Indianapolis.

Penn State taking two and Oregon winning one.

If Oregon wins, it will secure the No. 1 seed in the College Football Playoff and an undefeated record going into it, giving itself first choice at which bowl game the team wants to play in the quarterfinals.

Penn State head coach James Franklin has had trouble in top-five matchups in his career and is looking to end that against the Ducks. A win would earn the Big Ten champion a bye for either team and would be the Nittany Lions' first conference title since 2016 when they beat Wisconsin 38-31 in the championship game.

ence of Purdue and is worthy of their continued support.

"This was a truly difficult decision, as head coach Ryan Walters continued to lead the Boilermakers with integrity, resilience and poise in the face of considerable challenges. We thank Ryan for his steadfast commitment to Purdue and our student-athletes and wish him and his family the very best in his future endeavors. A national search has commenced to select new leadership for the Boilermaker football program. We will conduct a thorough search process and look forward to bringing aboard a new head coach equipped to restore Purdue football to its proud tradition of success."

In just two years leading the Boilermakers, Walters had a 5-19 overall record (3-15 Big Ten) and struggled to recruit or keep top talent, losing wide receiver Deion Burks to Oklahoma through the transfer portal and defensive lineman Nic Scourton to Texas A&M, among others.

Walters came to Purdue from Illinois, where he was a defensive coordinator. Before that he held the same position at Missouri as well. But the defensive success those teams had didn't translate to West Lafayette, Ind., and in his two seasons, the Boilermakers allowed an average of 35.2 points per game.

Purdue did play a tough schedule this year, facing off against Notre Dame, Ohio State, Oregon, Indiana and Penn State, all teams that seem likely to make the College Football Playoff.

The decision could have also come down to recruiting. The Boilermakers have struggled to put together good classes despite being in a Power Four conference. Just days before the early signing period begins, Purdue had just nine commits and is last in team score by a wide margin in 247Sports team rankings. The class trails 17th-place Northwestern in the Big Ten by 58.31 points. The class was ranked 97th in the country between San Jose State (96th) and Central Michigan (98th).

BIG 2024 Standings

	Conf.			All		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
Oregon	9	0	1.000	12	0	1.000
Penn State	8	1	.889	11	1	.917
Indiana	8	1	.889	11	1	.917
Ohio State	7	2	.778	10	2	.833
Illinois	6	3	.667	9	3	.750
Iowa	6	3	.667	8	4	.667
Michigan	5	4	.556	7	5	.583
Minnesota	5	4	.556	7	5	.583
Rutgers	4	5	.444	7	5	.583
USC	4	5	.444	6	6	.500
Washington	4	5	.444	6	6	.500
Nebraska	3	6	.333	6	6	.500
Michigan State	3	6	.333	5	7	.417
UCLA	3	6	.333	5	7	.417
Wisconsin	3	6	.333	5	7	.417
Northwestern	2	7	.222	4	8	.333
Maryland	1	8	.111	4	8	.333
Purdue	0	9	.000	1	11	.083

Nov. 29 Game

Minnesota 24, Wisconsin 7
Iowa 13, Nebraska 10

Nov. 30 Games

Michigan 13, **Ohio State 10**
Illinois 38, Northwestern 28
Notre Dame 49, USC 35
Penn State 44, Maryland 7
UCLA 20, Fresno State 13
Rutgers 41, Michigan State 14
Oregon 49, Washington 21
Indiana 66, Purdue 0

Dec. 7 Game

Oregon vs. Penn State, 8 p.m.*

All times Eastern

* Big Ten Championship Game at Lucas Oil Stadium, Indianapolis

The firing comes after Walters fired his offensive coordinator, Graham Harrell, in late September when the team was struggling to get anything going on that side of the ball.

Purdue will still have to pay 75 percent of what Walters is owed in his contract, which comes to \$9.34 million.

UW Bowl Streak Comes To End

In what has been a tough season for former Ohio State coach Luke Fickell and Wisconsin, the Badgers will not be invited to play in a bowl game after they lost to Minnesota 24-7 on Nov. 29. It's the first time since 2001 that Wisconsin won't be playing in a bowl game.

"I've been coaching for a good while, playing this game for a good while, and I don't know that I've been in a position in a situation like this, to be honest with you," Fickell said after the loss. "We have a lot of work to do. We have a lot of things we have to get done. We have a lot of things we have to fix up and correct, and unfortunately, we'll have a lot of time to do it. It starts with checking ourselves first and foremost, and leadership is the key to what we do. I take full responsibility for that."

Wisconsin's streak of bowl games began

BIG TEN NOTES Greg Wilson

Instead, Penn State will take the second spot in the game that will take place on Dec. 7 at Lucas Oil Stadium after beating Maryland 44-7 that same day. The Nittany Lions finished with a conference record of 8-1, their only loss coming at home to Ohio State on Nov. 2, but since the Buckeyes lost to both Oregon and Michigan, the Lions and Indiana finished ahead of them in the final Big Ten standings.

Penn State and Oregon didn't play each other this season, so this will be the first time the two teams match up as conference opponents and the first time the teams have played each other since 1995 when the Joe Paterno-led Nittany Lions beat Oregon 38-20. The only other three times the two teams matched up were in the 1960s, with

Purdue Fires Head Coach Walters

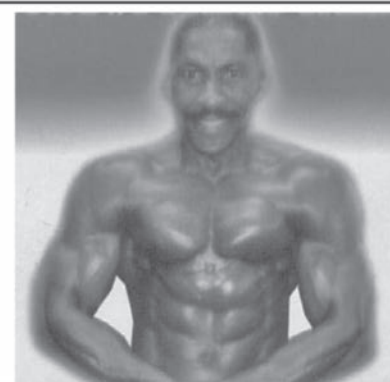
After a 66-0 loss to No. 10 Indiana on Nov. 30 and a 1-11 record on the season, Purdue fired head coach Ryan Walters, the school announced on Dec. 1 in a lengthy statement released by Mike Bobinski, the Boilermakers' athletic director.

"After an ongoing assessment, and in consultation with president Mung Chiang and the University's Board of Trustees, I have made the decision that a change in the leadership of our football program is necessary. As college athletics enters an entirely new era in 2025, it's a pivotal time for Purdue, and we must take the steps necessary to best position our football program for success. We are determined to provide the University and our incredibly loyal fans a football performance that reflects the excel-

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BIG TEN NOTES

in 2002 with Barry Alvarez at the helm for the Badgers and continued through runs under Bret Bielema (2008-12), Gary Anderson (2013-14) and Paul Chryst (2015-22), with Fickell successfully making a bowl game in his first season with the team, losing the ReliaQuest Bowl to LSU, 35-31, on New Year's Day of 2024.

The rivalry game finished with the Golden Gophers hoisting Paul Bunyan's Axe – the trophy that the winner of the game takes home every year – and with the Badgers finishing the year with a 5-7 record after a five-game losing streak to end the season. The first loss of that streak was a 28-13 contest in Camp Randall Stadium against No. 3 Penn State and the last was the loss to Minnesota, with losses to Iowa, No. 1 Oregon and Nebraska along the way.

In Fickell's second season with the Badgers, he fired Phil Longo, his offensive coordinator – whom he still had not replaced as BSB went to press, leading the Badgers to two games without an official coordinator – and lost his starting quarterback, Tyler Van Dyke, to a season-ending injury against Alabama in Week 3 of the regular season.

Junior quarterback Braedyn Locke struggled as his replacement, going 164 of 296 passing (55.4 completion percentage) and throwing for 1,936 yards, 13 touchdowns and 10 interceptions in 11 games.

It didn't help that the Badgers had to play against multiple top teams in the Big Ten – the Ducks, Nittany Lions, Iowa, and USC (when the Trojans were ranked No. 13 in the country) – along with the matchup against Alabama early in the season.

The Badgers are joined by Maryland, Michigan State, Northwestern, Purdue and UCLA as Big Ten teams that won't be playing in a bowl game this season.

"It's tough to say where we are. Obviously, we're not in a good place," Fickell said. "We're 5-7 and really we're just not even playing well. There's no excuse whether it's injuries, whether it's this, that or the other thing. I could sit here and tell you all the things that maybe have cost us and put us in a position where we haven't been able to find a way to climb out of it, but it comes down to you have a job to do. And unfortunately, we haven't done that for quite a while."

B1G Basketball Competes In Holiday Tournaments

With basketball season in full swing, many Big Ten men's basketball teams were in action for holiday tournaments.

Michigan State represented the conference in the Maui Invitational, which hosted many ranked teams, including the reigning champions, No. 2 UConn, which came in last place, losing to former Buckeye Zed Key and Dayton in the seventh-place game. The Spartans got off to a hot start in the event, beating Colorado 72-56 behind a 13-point performance from freshman guard Jase Richardson, who was the only player in double figures for MSU in the game.

But the Spartans lost to Memphis, which had beaten the Huskies in the first round, in the semifinals of the tournament 71-63, with Richardson leading in scoring again with 18 points. In the third-place game, the Spartans were able to come out on top over

No. 12 North Carolina 94-91 in a game in which six players finished in double digits, junior guard Tre Holloman leading the way with 19 points.

Oregon and Rutgers both represented the Big Ten in the Players Era Thanksgiving Festival. Both the Ducks and the Scarlet Knights came away with a win in their first game – Rutgers being led by true freshman Dylan Harper, who had 36 points in its 85-84 overtime win over Notre Dame, and Oregon upsetting No. 20 Texas A&M. While Oregon won its second game over San Diego State by a score of 78-68, Rutgers fell to No. 9 Alabama 95-90 on Nov. 27 in a game in which Harper scored 37 points with fellow freshman Ace Bailey scoring 22 points.

Harper became the first Division I freshman to score 35 or more points in back-to-back games in 20 years, according to ESPN Stats and Information.

The Knights were placed in the fifth-place game where they lost to Texas A&M 81-77 on Nov. 30. The Ducks had to face off against the Crimson Tide in the championship game and pulled off the upset to win it 83-81.

No. 14 Indiana struggled in the Battle 4 Atlantis tournament, losing to unranked Louisville 89-61 on Nov. 27 in the first round. The Hoosiers then had to face off against No. 3 Gonzaga – which had been upset by unranked West Virginia in overtime in the first round of the bracket – and suffered another double-digit loss, 89-73, forcing them into the last-place game against Providence where they got back to their winning ways with an 89-73 victory.

The Big Ten also had a team in the ESPN Events Invitational, with Minnesota representing the conference, although it didn't go very well for the Golden Gophers. There were only four teams in the event, but they lost in round one 68-66 to Wichita State in overtime before losing 57-51 to Wake Forest – shooting just 41.2 percent from the field and 16.7 percent from three – to earn a last-place finish in the tournament.

Also in a four-team event, the No. 13 Purdue team was able to beat NC State 71-61 in the first round behind a 22-point, eight-rebound night from junior forward Trey Kaufman-Renn.

In the Boilermakers' 80-78 win over No. 23 Ole Miss on Nov. 19, Kaufman-Renn led in scoring again with 25 points and 13 rebounds while sophomore and junior guards Myles Covin and Braden Smith were close behind with 20 and 18, respectively, to take home the championship of the Rady Children's Invitational.

Another Big Ten team took home a tournament win with Washington beating Santa Clara 76-69 on Nov. 29 to win the Acrisure Invitational behind 19 points and eight rebounds from transfer forward Great Osobor. The Huskies beat Colorado State 73-67 on Nov. 28 to make it to the finals and were 6-1 on the year.

USC also played in the Acrisure Invitational and suffered a much different result than its Pac-12-turned-Big-Ten rival. It lost in the first round by 35 points, falling 71-36 to Saint Mary's before losing 83-73 in a late start against New Mexico on Nov. 29.

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Bradshaw Investigated For Domestic Incident

Ohio State sophomore forward Aaron Bradshaw is being investigated by the university for a possible domestic incident that occurred at his off-campus apartment the week of Nov. 17, according to a Nov. 25 report from The Columbus Dispatch.

COURT REPORT Patrick Engels

The report came three days after Ohio State released a statement before its 104-60 blowout win over Campbell on Nov. 22 that Bradshaw was "not currently participating in team activities" for a reason that could not be explained due to "federal privacy laws." The 7-1 big man did not play against the Camels and also missed the next two games since BSB went to press against Green Bay on Nov. 25 and Pittsburgh on Nov. 29.

After the Campbell game, Ohio State head coach Jake Diebler declined to provide further comment on the situation, referring to the university statement each of the three times he was asked about Bradshaw.

"I'm understanding that you guys may have some questions. I just have to refer to the statement that was released and can't have any comment on that," Diebler said. "Just know I can't comment on that any further."

"I could just tell you right now that he's not participating currently, and anything else would just have to refer to the statement," he added when asked when Bradshaw stopped participating in team activities.

He also said in a Nov. 27 media availability that there is no update on Bradshaw's status, as he is continuing to go through the university process.

According to the Dispatch, no charges have been filed against Bradshaw and there is no time frame for his possible return or a final

decision on the university investigation. He is still listed on Ohio State's official roster.

Bradshaw, a five-star prospect who transferred from Kentucky this offseason, started each of the Buckeyes' first four games of the 2024-25 season, averaging 7.8 points and 4.8 rebounds in 23.8 minutes in those contests. The McDonald's All-American selection was also the Buckeyes' leading shot-blocker in that span with seven swats.

Mahaffey Expanding Offensive Game

Bradshaw's extended absence has required Ohio State to move some pieces around in its starting lineup, giving frontcourt players such as Sean Stewart and Devin Royal more minutes and added opportunities to assert themselves in the paint.

Although both Stewart and Royal have experienced an uptick in production since Bradshaw's departure, perhaps no Buckeye has benefited from the added responsibilities more than junior guard/forward Evan Mahaffey, who has emerged as a do-it-all player for the Buckeyes this season.

Despite starting 35 of 36 games last season in large part due to his defensive versatility, Mahaffey struggled to make an impact on offense in his first season with the Buckeyes after transferring from Penn State. He scored in double figures in just four games and logged two or fewer points in 18 contests, six of those being scoreless outings.

Those offensive struggles seemed to carry over to this year when he combined for just 10 points on 4-of-8 shooting through his first four games, but in the three games played since Bradshaw's absence, Mahaffey's offensive numbers have skyrocketed.

In his first start of the season in Ohio State's win over Campbell, the former Nittany Lion seemed more comfortable and aggressive with the ball in his hand, scoring a season-high 11 points on 5-of-7 shooting. Mahaffey did not start the next game against Green Bay as Stewart returned to the lineup

OSU Men's Basketball Commitments

Players in the class of 2025 who have committed to 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

after sitting out one game due to an injury, but he still continued his positive momentum on offense, scoring another 10 points on 5-of-6 shooting in 22 minutes played in the 102-69 win.

Mahaffey, who followed up those two games by scoring six points on 3-of-4 shooting in Ohio State's 91-90 overtime loss to Pittsburgh, said after the Campbell game that he attributes his increased offensive numbers this season to the growing confidence he has with the ball in his hands, which has been evident on the number of aggressive drives he's had to the rim of late, ones which he either missed or passed up last year.

"It's just my confidence," Mahaffey said. "I know that I can typically get in my head about stuff, and my faith and then Coach Diebler just having my back and telling me to be more aggressive. And my teammates all the time are just always on me to be more aggressive, get to my spots and everything. So it's just them having my back, but mainly just my faith."

When asked after the Campbell game about Mahaffey's growing impact on the team this season, Diebler said that he has had many conversations with the junior about maintaining his aggressiveness not only on offense but on defense as well, something that he thinks has caused him to have his presence felt on both ends of the floor in recent weeks.

"Evan can be really impactful when he's being aggressive and playing aggressive on both sides of the ball," Diebler said "I trust Evan. He has great basketball instincts. The biggest issue that he and I continually talk about is just staying aggressive. And that's both sides. Being active defensively, getting deflections, getting rebounds. Offensively, driving, he had a couple good drives, he was active on the glass."

"You could feel his presence on the court, and that's what we talked about. He's capable of that, and we need him to do that every time he's out there because he can be impactful with his versatility."

Thornton Reaches 1,000-Point Plateau

Against Green Bay, Ohio State junior forward Bruce Thornton added another notable accomplishment to his decorated Buckeye career when he recorded his 1,000th career point on a corner three-pointer with 14:15 left in the contest.

Thornton, whose triple gave the Buckeyes a 58-47 lead and helped ignite a 42-14 run in the win, became just the 61st player in program history to eclipse the 1,000-point plateau, doing so in just 76 career games.

When asked to put his Ohio State career in perspective after reaching the milestone, Thornton – who finished with 25 points and nine assists against Green Bay – said he takes pride in being able to represent and produce at a school like Ohio State, and he gave all credit to his teammates and coaches who have helped him succeed to this point in his

career.

"It's a blessing just being here and wearing this jersey across my chest for my third year now," Thornton said. "I just wear it with pride. I wear it with honor each and every day because it's a blessing to be here, especially playing each and every night in front of Buckeye Nation, my coaching staff and especially for my brothers that I play with and grind with in the summer."

"They've been a blessing (for me). I have a bunch of teammates who have helped get me to this point, and we'll keep moving forward."

Thornton's 1,000-point milestone is just one of many accomplishments for the junior in his Buckeye career so far. In addition to starting each of his 77 games for the team in his career, he also has earned numerous conference recognitions, including an All-Big Ten Tournament team honor as a freshman in 2023, a third-team All-Big Ten nod in 2023-24 and a preseason All-Big Ten team selection this season.

Thornton didn't have much to say after the game about his own successes – which also includes a 307-95 career assist-to-turnover ratio – but his coach made sure to let the public know just how much the Fairburn, Ga., product means to this program.

"Bruce is a special player," he said after the Green Bay win. "I think he's the best point guard in the country."

Gottlieb Praises Thornton, Diebler After Game

Diebler was not the only coach to deliver praise to Thornton after the win over the Phoenix.

Green Bay first-year head coach Doug Gottlieb – a former standout guard at Oklahoma State (1997-2000) and longtime sports radio host at ESPN, CBS and FOX Sports – also had nothing but good things to say about the Buckeye point guard.

In true sports talk radio host form, Gottlieb was asked just three questions but spoke for over seven minutes in his postgame press conference, using a good portion of his time to laud Thornton's all-around abilities and high basketball IQ.

"Bruce Thornton is such a good player," Gottlieb said. "I know he had 25 and nine, but he blew up a couple of plays that we had where guys should be wide open, but he just instinctively read it, and it wasn't his job at the time. That stuff is what I'm sure their staff will take credit for, but we hadn't run it (before), so that's just a really smart basketball player understanding, looking around, communicating."

"Again, everybody will get caught up in the 25 points, but you can't speed him up," he added later. "He's always there defensively. He leads. He shoots. He scores. He passes. He's a big-time basketball player. And the rest of the guys just defend and feed off his energy."

Gottlieb – who revealed that his father, former University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee



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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

men's basketball coach Bob Gottlieb, played at Ohio State as a walk-on during its 1960 national championship season – also showed off his knowledge of Buckeye basketball by placing Thornton in the context of other great OSU guards who have come before him.

“Bruce is my – I’m trying to think – favorite Ohio State point guard since Scoonie Penn (1998-2000) or Jay Burson (1985-89). Jay Burson was my hero growing up. And when Ohio State has a big-time point guard, they usually have really good teams at the end of the year.”

Gottlieb also used a good portion of his press conference to laud the job Diebler and his staff have done this season and offseason to put a competitive team on the floor, specifically praising the way they embraced the changing world of NIL and devoted their financial resources to bringing in high-impact transfers.

“If we’re cutting the brass tacks, the way this thing works is you have to spend your money wisely,” Gottlieb said. “And however much money they have, they spent it wisely on their bigs. They got Sean Stewart, (he’s) in a ball screen role or just be a big guy in the middle, and they just drive off him, and they wedge. They are accepting their roles and they’re flourishing in them.”

Regardless of the talent they brought in through the transfer portal this offseason, Gottlieb believes that Diebler is the right man for this job at Ohio State, a thought he suggested many around the college basketball circle also share.

“I thought Coach Diebler – we watch a lot of tape, we’ve been watching tape on them a lot, and they are doing a very good job,” he said. “So if anyone has questions about the hire, just watch the tape and just ask basketball people. They have good players, but they’re playing to their roles. They’re playing really hard. They’re playing very physical, and I think Ohio State basketball is in a really good place.”

Other Notes And Tidbits

• Diebler provided an update on the status of sixth-year guard Ques Glover after the Green Bay game, saying that they are “seeing some progress” out of Glover recently and are being cautious with his recovery. Glover, who transferred from Kansas State over the offseason, has missed the last four games while dealing with a lower-body injury he suffered during the Texas A&M loss. Glover was having his best game as a Buckeye before going down with the ailment, scoring six points on 2-of-4 shooting from three in eight minutes of play.

• Ohio State lost out on another recruiting battle for a high-profile prospect since BSB last went to press. This time, it was Napa (Calif.) Prolific Prep five-star power forward Niko Bundalo, who committed to Washington on Nov. 27. The nation’s 27th-best prospect and seventh-best power forward has been a key recruiting target for Diebler and Ohio State since he took over as head coach, even hosting the five-star on an official visit the week-

end of Sept. 21.

Bundalo originally included Ohio State in his final four list of schools along with Michigan, North Carolina and UConn in October, but, according to ESPN, he was no longer considering any of those finalists and completely restarted his recruitment within weeks of making that list, leading him to commit to Washington just before Thanksgiving Day.

Bundalo, a Uniontown, Ohio, native, marks the third highly-ranked recruit whom Ohio State has lost out on in recent weeks. Bundalo’s Prolific Prep teammate, five-star combo guard and Canton, Ohio, native Daryn Peterson (6-5, 195), chose Kansas over the Buckeyes on Nov. 1, then Branson (Mo.) Link Academy four-star combo guard Jerry Easter committed to USC on Nov. 25 after visiting OSU earlier this fall. Ohio State is still in the running for Atlanta Holy Innocents Episcopal School five-star power forward Caleb Wilson (6-9, 205), however, who put the Buckeyes in his final five along with Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee and UCF on Nov. 14.

• Former Ohio State center Joey Brunk announced on Twitter on Nov. 26 that he is retiring from basketball due to another injury setback to his back. Brunk, who played one season at Ohio State in 2021-22, averaging 2.4 points and 1.6 rebounds in 28 games (five starts), had been playing for BK KVIS Pardubice of the Czech Republic National Basketball League, averaging 13.5 points and 2.1 rebounds in 13 games, according to EuroBasket.com. “I’m fortunate to have lived my childhood dream of playing collegiately and professionally,” Brunk wrote in a statement released on his Twitter account. “My career has been full of ups and downs, but the greatest gift it gave me was the wonderful friendships across universities and countries.”

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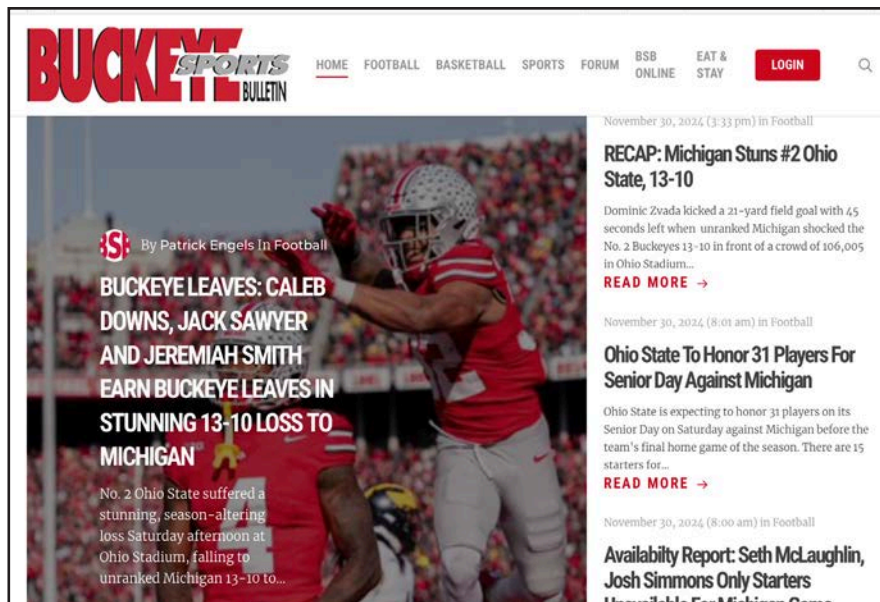
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Ohio State Suffers Setback In OT Loss To Pitt

By PATRICK ENGELS
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Associate Editor

Ohio State saw a real opportunity to return to the AP top 25 fall by the wayside since BSB last went to press, with the Buckeyes picking up a blowout win over Green Bay on Nov. 25 but then suffering a difficult overtime loss to Pittsburgh on Nov. 29 to fall to 5-2 on the season.

After throttling Green Bay and head coach Doug Gottlieb by 33 points, Jake Diebler's team found itself within reach of a statement home win over the Panthers on multiple occasions, holding two-possession leads both late in regulation and in overtime, before succumbing to some poor late-game execution and falling to Pittsburgh on a buzzer-beating three.

This loss most likely left Ohio State out of contention for a spot in the top 25 rankings set to be released on Dec. 2, a difficult sequence of events that is only made worse by

the continued absence of sophomore forward Aaron Bradshaw, who has missed the last three games while being investigated by the university for a reported domestic incident.

Thornton Leads Second-Half Surge

Ohio State used a second-half explosion and some efficient backcourt play to improve to 5-1 on the season Nov. 25, downing Green Bay (2-5) 102-69 in front of 10,123 fans inside Value City Arena.

The Buckeyes led just 53-47 with 15:10 left in the game in large part because of the brilliance of the NCAA's leading scorer and Green Bay senior guard Anthony Roy – who scored 30 points on 10-of-16 shooting to outpace his 28.0 points per game average.

But Roy's playmaking did not deter Ohio State, which went on a resounding 42-14 run in 12:06 on longtime FOX Sports Radio host Doug Gottlieb's team to run away with an eventual 33-point victory and eclipse the

Ohio State 102, Green Bay 69

Nov. 25, 2024			
Value City Arena • Columbus			
	1	2	F
Green Bay (2-5)	32	37	69
Ohio State (5-1)	42	60	102

Green Bay	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Roy	34	10-16	2-3	0-2	3	1	30
Wonders	27	2-6	1-2	0-3	0	4	7
Hall	30	1-6	1-2	0-1	1	1	3
Ruedinger	29	1-5	1-2	0-2	1	3	3
Johnson	15	0-2	2-2	0-3	1	1	2
Wrecke	16	2-4	4-4	1-4	0	2	8
Tweedy	18	3-3	0-1	1-2	5	1	6
Oselka	9	3-3	0-0	0-0	0	1	6
O'Hara	16	1-2	0-0	0-1	0	3	2
Santoro	2	1-2	0-0	0-1	0	0	2
Muoneke	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	2	0
Wade	1	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0
Totals	200	24-49	11-16	3-20	11	19	69

Percentages: FG: 49.0%. FT: 68.8%. **Three-point field goals:** 10-24 (Roy 8-12, Wonders 2-5, Hall 0-2, Ruedinger 0-2, Johnson 0-2, Santoro 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 2. **Blocked shots:** 1 (Oselka). **Turnovers:** 18 (Hall 5, Wonders 4, Tweedy 3, Roy 2, Johnson 2, Wrecke, Team). **Steals:** 3 (Ruedinger 2, Johnson).

Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Thornton	32	7-10	6-7	0-2	9	1	25
Johnson Jr.	30	6-13	0-2	0-4	2	1	17
Stewart	22	5-9	1-1	4-4	2	4	11
Parrish	27	3-11	3-4	2-2	0	2	10
Royal	25	5-6	0-0	1-10	2	3	10
Mobley Jr.	25	5-8	1-1	0-0	0	1	14
Mahaffey	22	5-6	0-0	1-2	4	2	10
Etzler	3	1-1	0-0	0-1	0	0	2
Njegovan	2	1-2	0-0	1-1	1	0	2
White	6	0-1	1-4	0-0	0	0	1
Baumann	2	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Nash	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Parks	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Totals	200	38-68	12-19	11-26	20	14	102

Percentages: FG: 55.9%. FT: 63.2%. **Three-point field goals:** 14-31 (Johnson 5-10, Thornton 5-7, Parrish 1-6, Mobley 3-5, Mahaffey 0-1, Njegovan 0-1, Baumann 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 2. **Blocked shots:** 4 (Mahaffey 2, Thornton, Stewart). **Turnovers:** 8 (Thornton 2, Stewart 2, Mahaffey 2, Parrish, Mobley). **Steals:** 10 (Mobley 4, Thornton, Parrish, Royal, Mahaffey, White, Parks). **Officials:** Harris, Kimble, Love. **Attendance:** 10,123.

Pittsburgh 91, Ohio State 90

Nov. 29, 2024				
Value City Arena • Columbus				
	1	2	3	F
Pittsburgh (7-1)	39	38	14	91
Ohio State (5-2)	48	29	13	90

Pittsburgh	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Lowe	42	9-20	10-11	1-3	4	4	28
Leggett	42	9-22	2-4	2-8	4	5	21
Delalic	37	2-6	0-0	0-0	0	0	5
Corhen	21	1-3	2-2	3-2	0	4	4
Diaz Graham, G	19	0-1	2-2	2-2	1	1	2
Austin	37	5-10	1-2	1-4	0	3	16
Amadou Kante	17	3-4	6-9	4-0	1	5	12
Cummings	10	1-1	0-0	1-0	0	0	3
Barnes Jr.	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	2	0
Diaz Graham, J	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Totals	200	30-67	23-30	16-20	10	24	91

Percentages: FG: 44.8%. FT: 76.7%. **Three-point field goals:** 8-24 (Austin 5-8, Lowe 0-5, Leggett 1-5, Delalic 1-4, Diaz Graham, G 0-1, Cummings 1-1). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 2 (Lowe, Amadou Kante). **Turnovers:** 11 (Lowe 3, Delalic 3, Leggett 2, Diaz Graham, G 2, Amadou Kante). **Steals:** 5 (Leggett 2, Austin 2, Amadou Kante).

Ohio State	Total	FG	FT	Reb.	A	PF	Pts.
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.
Thornton	45	7-15	7-9	0-3	10	2	24
Royal	33	5-10	8-12	3-0	1	3	18
Parrish	28	5-7	1-1	2-5	1	2	15
Johnson	38	3-9	1-2	0-3	5	1	9
Stewart	16	3-4	1-3	0-5	0	4	7
Mobley Jr.	24	2-7	1-2	0-0	2	1	7
Mahaffey	32	3-4	0-0	1-4	1	5	6
Parks	9	2-2	0-0	2-1	1	2	4
Totals	200	30-58	19-29	8-21	20	20	90

Percentages: FG: 51.7%. FT: 65.5%. **Three-point field goals:** 11-20 (Thornton 3-5, Johnson 2-5, Mobley 2-5, Parrish 4-4, Royal 0-1). **Team rebounds:** 3. **Blocked shots:** 2 (Stewart, Mahaffey). **Turnovers:** 11 (Johnson 4, Parrish 3, Thornton 2, Stewart, Mobley). **Steals:** 5 (Mahaffey 2, Parrish, Johnson, Stewart). **Officials:** Harris, Kimble, Love. **Attendance:** 13,064.

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100-point mark in consecutive games for the first time since Dec. 15 and 17, 1990.

"We knew going into this game that Green Bay had some offensive firepower," Diebler said after the game. "Roy is a gifted, gifted player, and I thought for the most part, we made things tough on him. I'm most proud of how we responded when they cut the lead to six.

"Our response in that moment was really impressive. And I think it was led – maybe after a pointed conversation – by our players. The leadership of our upperclassmen kind of took over at that point."

Ohio State's veteran leaders were involved from the start of the contest, beginning with senior guard Meechie Johnson Jr. hitting on back-to-back threes after missing his first two attempts from long range to give OSU an early 8-2 lead with 16:13 left.

Green Bay clawed back in the ensuing minutes to trail 12-11 with 14:32 left on a three by Roy, but the Buckeyes answered 1:32 later with a three from junior guard Bruce Thornton, sparking a 19-8 sequence for Ohio State that put it up 31-19 with 7:01 remaining after another Johnson three, his fourth of the half.

Roy scored five straight to make it 31-24, but the Buckeyes were able to bring the lead back into double digits, leading by 14, 39-25,

after another Thornton triple at 2:47.

Roy continued to dazzle to keep his team in the game. He hit his fourth three of the half and then found a cutting Roe Oselka for a layup on consecutive possessions, all before Oselka stole the ball away from Thornton and laid in another layup to cut OSU's lead to just 39-32 with 42 seconds left.

Ohio State scored the final points of the half off a Johnson three, giving the South Carolina transfer his 15th point of the first half on 5-of-8 shooting from long range. Roy had 14 first-half points on 5-of-9 shooting, 4 of 7 from three.

"He's a great player, great scorer on all three levels," Thornton said of Roy. "But we could have done a better job defensively on him."

The start of the second half had a similar feel to the first, with the Buckeyes opening with a 7-2 run but Green Bay answering back with three triples – two of those from Roy – and four free throws to trail just 53-47 with 15:10 left.

Ohio State punched right back with a Johnson layup and Thornton three – which gave the All-Big Ten guard his 1,000th career point – to go back up 58-47, but Gottlieb's team continued to hang around, trailing 61-53 with 11:56 left after a Ben Tweedy layup.

But that was the closest Green Bay got the rest of the game due to the efforts of Thornton, who went on a personal 8-0 run to put OSU up 69-53 with 10:26 left. Ohio State's lead stayed between 14 and 16 points until true freshman John Mobley Jr. hit on consec-

utive threes to give his team a commanding 80-59 lead with 7:30 left.

Mobley's triples were a key part of a 22-2 stretch for Ohio State – which began with a Thornton free throw at 8:23 and ended with a Devin Royal dunk at 3:04 to go up 95-61 – that saw the Buckeyes shoot 7 of 9 from the field and limit Green Bay to 0-of-5 shooting in that same span

Despite two more threes from Roy, Ohio State continued to suffocate Green Bay on both ends, eventually eclipsing 100 points on a layup from redshirt junior forward Kalen Etzler before cruising to the 33-point win.

"They don't have any weaknesses defensively," Gottlieb said after the game. "That's a really well-coached team. If you watch on tape, and you look at the analytics, their defense is outstanding."

Ohio State was led in the win by Thornton, who had 16 of his season-high 25 points in the second half and also tallied a game-high nine assists. Johnson (17) and Sean Stewart (11) had season highs of their own, while Mobley (14), Evan Mahaffey (10), Micah Parrish (10) and Royal (10) all finished in double figures. Royal led the Buckeyes with 11 off the glass.

The Phoenix did not get much production outside of Roy's 30 points. The next-best scorer was redshirt freshman guard Mac Wrecke with eight on 2-of-4 shooting along with a team-high five rebounds.

Late-Game Collapses Kill Bucks In OT Loss

Ohio State (5-2) finished its four-game homestand with a demoralizing 91-90 overtime defeat to Pittsburgh (7-1) on Nov. 29 in front of 13,064 fans at Value City Arena.

The Buckeyes appeared like they were on their way to a 6-1 record and statement Power Four win on numerous occasions, leading 55-43 early in the second half, 77-72 with just 1:37 left in regulation and then 89-85 with 16 seconds left in overtime.

But sloppy play and some crucial missed free throws caused them to blow each of these advantages, the last of them resulting in a 6-1 run for Pittsburgh that allowed it to escape Columbus with the unlikely one-point win.

"(I'm) certainly disappointed in some of the lapses we had from an execution standpoint at the end of regulation and also in overtime," Diebler said. "These are easily correctable things, and this can serve us really well if we're able to respond appropriately."

The Buckeyes were poised for a fourth straight win when they benefited from some hot first-half shooting – 69.0 percent from the field (20 of 29) and 66.7 percent from three (6 of 9) to lead 48-39 at halftime.

Ohio State continued to excel on offense out of the break to lead 57-46 after a Stewart jumper with 16:16 left, but things soon took a dramatic turn when the Buckeyes were held without a field goal and committed six turnovers in the next 6:39, allowing Pittsburgh to embark on a 17-1 run and take a 63-58 lead with 8:44 remaining.

Ohio State rebounded and used a 15-5 run to go up 73-68 with 3:13 left after two Royal free throws and then, after Pittsburgh cut the deficit back to just one, found itself ahead 77-72 with just 1:37 left after a corner three from Parrish and a Johnson free throw.

The Panthers continued to battle, getting a three-pointer from Zack Austin on the next possession and later a jumper from sopho-

more guard Jaland Lowe to tie the game and force overtime.

Ohio State had a chance to win the game with five seconds left but missed a contested running jumper from Thornton.

In overtime, Ohio State found itself up 86-80 with 1:53 left on a pair of Thornton free throws and then 89-85 with 16 seconds remaining on split free throws by Mobley before disaster struck again.

Lowe made three free throws with seven seconds left after Mahaffey fouled him on a three-point attempt, and then the Panthers got the ball down just two, 90-88, with six seconds left after Royal went 1 of 2 from the line, one of three Buckeyes – Thornton and Mobley the others – to miss a free throw in the final 1:04.

That sequence led to Lowe finding an open Austin at the top of the key for a game-winning three with just 0.4 seconds left to allow the Panthers to escape Columbus with an improbable road win.

Ohio State was led in the loss by Thornton, who recorded his first double-double of the season with 24 points and 10 assists, while Royal (18) and Parrish (15) also reached double figures. Pittsburgh was powered by Lowe with a career-high 28 points on 9-of-20 shooting, while Ishmael Leggett had a double-double with 21 points and 10 rebounds.

Ohio State shot 51.7 percent for the game (20 of 38), including 55 percent from distance (11 of 20), but was just 1 of 5 in overtime. The Buckeyes were 10 of 14 from the stripe in the extra session, but 4 of 8 in the final 1:04.

The Buckeyes, led by Parish with seven, were outrebounded 36-29 for the game.

Ohio State will play three games before BSB next goes to press, including Big Ten contests at Maryland on Dec. 4 (6:30 p.m., BTN) and home against Rutgers on Dec. 7 (noon, FS1) and a neutral-site battle with No. 4 Auburn at Atlanta's State Farm Arena on Dec. 14 (1 p.m., TBA) in the Holiday Hoops-giving Event.



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Cambridge Makes Most Of Starting Minutes

For the second week in a row, Ohio State was without star junior forward Cotie McMahon. Starting with the 106-42 win over Ohio on Nov. 20, McMahon has been out of the lineup as she deals with a lower leg injury. A 14.4 points per game scorer in 2023-24 and an All-Big Ten forward in both her freshman and sophomore seasons, McMahon had started in each of her first 68 games as a Buckeye up to that point.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE Bobby Gorbett

Despite being described by head coach Kevin McGuff as “day-to-day” after Ohio State’s win over Ohio, McMahon hasn’t returned to the court since she played in all 40 minutes and scored a team-high 21 points in the team’s narrow 67-63 victory over Belmont on Nov. 17.

Redshirt sophomore guard Kennedy Cambridge was McGuff’s choice to replace McMahon in the starting lineup. Through four games, Cambridge has done a solid job alongside her younger sister, and former No. 2-ranked recruit from the 2024 class, guard Jalani Cambridge.

Kennedy Cambridge has averaged 7.3 points per game while connecting on 13 of

30 field-goal attempts for a 43.3 field-goal percentage in four games since being inserted into the starting lineup.

Cambridge got out to a bit of a slow start in the Buckeyes’ dominant win over Ohio, a game in which she scored only four points on 2-of-9 shooting and fouled out after 28 minutes played, but she responded in the team’s next game against Bowling Green.

In 28 minutes on the court, Cambridge scored a season-high 10 points and made 4 of 5 shot attempts en route to Ohio State’s 96-53 win on Nov. 24.

“It feels fun,” Cambridge said after the Bowling Green game about what it means to play in games after redshirting for Ohio State a year ago.

“My first games were shaky, but I feel like my coaches have instilled so much confidence in me,” she said. “I’m finally getting back to myself because I haven’t played a game in like 600 days. It’s been a while, and I feel like my coaches have done a good job of telling me that I can do this, I can do that.”

According to McGuff, Cambridge’s impacts on the game stretch beyond her scoring.

“It gives us a different look,” he said. “I think the thing Kennedy is doing right now is just kind of being herself and fitting in and doing what her team needs from her. She’s defending at a high level, she’s rebounding, and she’s keeping it simple and moving the ball on offense and doing a great job.”

Starting in her third game of the season, Ohio State’s 70-47 Thanksgiving Day win over



SONNY BROCKWAY

FILLING IN NICELY — Redshirt sophomore guard Kennedy Cambridge has played a vital role for Ohio State by replacing injured forward Cotie McMahon and averaging 7.3 points in those four games.

Old Dominion, Cambridge proved she could impact the game beyond the eight points she scored. Making 4 of 8 field-goal attempts on one end, Cambridge was also a fearsome defender on the other end with three steals, tied for the second most on the team.

In an 87-51 win over Utah State on Nov. 29, Cambridge wasn’t quite as efficient as she

had been the previous day as a scorer, but she still had a solid day, making 3 of 8 shots for seven points. Her biggest impact came as a playmaker. The former Wildcat led the team with five assists and contributed on the glass with four rebounds.

She may not have the abilities of McMahon, but Cambridge also understands it would be unrealistic for her to have that expectation. Instead, Cambridge just hopes to play her own game.

“Cotie can go out there and score 30 points per game,” Cambridge said. “That’s not going to happen for me. I’m realistic about myself. I know that I can help my team by doing the dirty work, by playing defense, by getting people open, by making the easy plays.”

Thierry Reaches 1,000 Career Points

Often overshadowed as a scorer in her Buckeye career, senior guard Taylor Thierry reached the impressive milestone of 1,000 career points scored during Ohio State’s win over Old Dominion.

Needing six points to reach the 1,000 mark, Thierry officially crossed the threshold with seven points on 2-of-8 shooting against the Monarchs.

After she made two free throws earlier in the third quarter to record her 998th and 999th career points, Thierry got past 1,000 career points with a layup with 3:44 to go in the third period that put Ohio State up 46-25.

Although she hit the 1,000-point mark in the game, Thierry’s Thanksgiving Day perfor-

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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

mance was highlighted by what she did in the other areas apart from scoring. Against Old Dominion, Thierry recorded eight rebounds and three steals, both of which marks were tied for the second most on the team.

Thierry, who was rewarded with All-Big Ten second-team status in back-to-back seasons as a sophomore and junior, has provided the Buckeyes with a level of consistency and efficiency dating back to her sophomore season in 2022-23. Scoring 13.5 points per game as a sophomore, Thierry led the team with a 62.5 field-goal percentage, which is also tied for fifth in a single season for Ohio State.

Although her scoring numbers went down slightly in 2023-24, Thierry was still the Buckeyes' most efficient scorer on the team, making 61.0 percent of her field-goal attempts. The biggest difference between her junior campaign and her sophomore year was the added efficiency from three-point range. Making 44.8 percent of her three-point shots, Thierry also possessed a team-high efficiency from beyond the arc.

Through seven games this year, Thierry has been as reliable as ever, averaging 10.9 points per game on 55.8 percent shooting from the floor. Thierry has taken only 13 three-point attempts this season but has already made six of those attempts (46.2 percent).

Bucks Cruise Past Mid-Major Opponents

Outside of its nail-biter against Belmont earlier in the season, Ohio State has not been tested much at all in its nonconference action so far. Even including their four-point win over the Bruins, the Buckeyes have beaten opponents by an average of just over 35 points per game through seven games.

In their last four games, the Buckeyes were particularly convincing. The 106-42 win over the Bobcats was the program's largest margin of victory in nearly 20 years.

The Buckeyes followed that up with the nearly as impressive 43-point win over Bowling Green a few days later on Nov. 24. The Buckeyes were almost as dominant against mid-major opponents in Daytona Beach, Fla., at the Ocean Center Convention Center, where the team outscored its two opponents 157-98.

The sizable margins of victory do more for the Buckeyes than just look good on a résumé when NCAA tournament time rolls around, though. With the result of games decided early on, McGuff has been able to give bench players a fair share of the remaining minutes left in the game early in the second half in most contests.

The young Buckeyes inserted into the game have taken advantage of opportunities granted, with some confidence-building performances. Against Ohio, freshman center

Elsa Lemmilä was an unstoppable force, leading the team with 21 points and 14 rebounds.

Freshman guard Ava Watson had her own breakout performance a few days later against Bowling Green, scoring a team-high 20 points on 7-of-14 shooting, which included 6 of 10 on three-point shots.

After the Bowling Green game, Kennedy Cambridge emphasized not just the importance of getting the entire rotation in the game, but how the large leads allow McGuff to try different lineup combinations.

"I think that this is really good for our chemistry, because with these 'blowouts,' as you guys say, we have the opportunity to switch people in, so people have the opportunity to play with certain groups," Cambridge said. "Because again, anything can happen. Somebody can foul out, and somebody has to come off the bench. I feel like this is a good test run for us."

The Buckeyes are unlikely to blow out

their first Big Ten opponent Illinois on Dec. 8, but the team should be able to put its chemistry on display as conference play unfolds.

Jaloni Cambridge Is Plank's Lady Buck For November

In her first seven collegiate games, true freshman point guard Jaloni Cambridge was nothing short of spectacular as the leader of the offense, winning Plank's Lady Buck honors for November.

In seven November games, Cambridge led the Buckeyes in scoring with 16.1 points and assists with 4.9, and she also averaged 4.3 rebounds, with a team-high average of 3.0 steals, while shooting 47.7 percent from the floor.

Cambridge's emergence as a marquee player within Ohio State's lineup in November helped the team get out to an undefeated 7-0 start.




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Ohio State Wins Two In Daytona Beach

By **BOBBY GORBETT**

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State picked up its third and fourth straight blowout wins in the Daytona Beach Classic on Nov. 28 and 29, in Daytona Beach, Fla., with shutdown defensive performances and an offensive breakout from fifth-year forward Ajae Petty.

In a 70-47 Thanksgiving Day win over Old Dominion, Petty had a season-high and team-high 24 points.

The Buckeyes' high-pressure defense was dominant the next day in an 87-51 win over Utah State in which Ohio State forced 36 turnovers.

OSU Routs ODU Behind Strong Petty Performance

It wasn't a great shooting start to the Daytona Beach Classic for the Buckeyes, who made just three of their first 14 shots. However, Ohio State's defense was in full force and created 10 turnovers in 6:44 to begin the game. Ohio State took an 8-4 lead at 2:25 on a Madison Greene free throw and later scored points off another Old Dominion turnover when senior guard Taylor Thierry came up with a steal and found redshirt sophomore guard Kennedy Cambridge for a layup as the team took a 10-4 lead out of the first period. In all Old Dominion (5-2) had 13 turnovers in the first quarter, and Ohio State (6-0) had six steals.

Petty got the Buckeyes out of a bit of a funk to start the second quarter, and she scored four straight layups to help give the team an 18-10 lead with 6:31 to go. Petty's last layup kick-started an 18-4 scoring run that took every second of the stanza off the clock, sending the Buckeyes into halftime with a 34-14 lead.

During the run, freshman guard Jaloni Cambridge gave the Buckeyes their first double-digit lead of the game with a layup and free throw after she was fouled to make it 21-10 at the 5:09 mark. Junior guard Chance Gray followed her lead the next play with an and-1 layup of her own, although she couldn't connect on the free throw. Gray redeemed herself at the line at the end of the half – and the run – with a pair of free throws to give the Buckeyes the 20-point halftime lead.

Ohio State continued its lockdown defense in the second half, allowing no points over the first 3:21, and on the offensive end scored four points on a layup from Petty and free throws from Thierry to make it 38-14. The Monarchs finally got their offense going at the 6:39 mark of the third quarter with a layup by Mariah Clayton and cut the Buck-

Ohio State 70, Old Dominion 47										
Nov. 28, 2024										
Ocean Center • Daytona Beach, Fla.										
	1	2	3	4	F					
Old Dominion (5-2)	4	10	18	15	47					
Ohio State (6-0)	10	24	16	20	70					
ODU	Total	FT	Reb.							
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Fields	34	4-13	0-2	0-3	3	2	11			
Fontana	32	4-11	3-4	1-3	0	1	11			
Buford	19	1-2	2-2	1-3	1	3	4			
Thompson	15	0-5	0-0	0-2	2	5	0			
Gerken	13	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	4	0			
Clayton	19	4-8	1-2	1-4	0	1	9			
Brown	30	3-6	1-2	2-3	0	1	7			
Atchinson	11	1-3	1-2	0-1	2	1	3			
Muhammad	12	0-0	0-0	0-1	1	1	0			
Estupinan	6	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	1	0			
Felder	4	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Kenembeni	3	0-3	0-0	1-1	0	0	0			
Fitzgerald	2	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Totals	200	18-53	8-14	7-27	9	20	47			
Percentages: FG: 34.0%. FT: 57.1%. Three-point field goals: 3-12. (Fields 3-7, Fontana 0-2, Thompson 0-2, Atchinson 0-1). Team rebounds: 5. Blocked shots: 1 (Fontana). Turnovers: 28 (Buford 5, Fields 4, Fontana 4, Thompson 3, Cunningham 3, Atchinson 3, Clayton 2, Brown, Muhammad, Estupinan). Steals: 10 (Buford 4, Fields 2, Fontana 2, Cunningham, Atchinson).										
Ohio State	Total	FT	Reb.							
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Petty	27	11-13	2-4	2-9	0	2	24			
J. Cambridge	27	6-14	3-3	0-3	6	2	15			
K. Cambridge	27	4-8	0-0	0-1	1	2	8			
Thierry	29	2-8	3-4	5-3	2	4	7			
Gray	27	1-7	3-5	1-2	1	0	5			
Watson	25	3-7	2-2	0-2	0	2	8			
Lemmila	13	0-2	2-2	0-8	1	3	2			
Greene	13	0-2	1-2	1-0	0	0	1			
Walker	12	0-1	0-0	0-0	1	0	0			
Totals	200	27-62	16-22	9-31	12	15	70			
Percentages: FG: 43.5%. FT: 72.7%. Three-point field goals: 0-11 (Gray 0-5, Watson 0-3, J. Cambridge 0-2, Thierry 0-1). Team rebounds: 3. Blocked shots: 4 (Petty, Lemmila, Greene, Walker). Turnovers: 19 (Petty 3, J. Cambridge 3, K. Cambridge 3, Gray 2, Lemmila 2, Walker 2, Thierry, Greene). Steals: 18 (Watson 4, J. Cambridge 3, K. Cambridge 3, Thierry 3, Petty 2, Gray 2, Walker). Officials: Nicole Brannon, Bruce Morris, Kevin Pethel Attendance: 60										

eyes' lead to 44-25 with an 11-6 scoring run that took the game down to 4:01 remaining in the third.

Ohio State's offense struggled to end the quarter, as it managed only four points in the last 3:43, but the team still carried a 50-32 lead into the final period.

The Monarchs kept fighting through much of the fourth quarter, closing to 57-41 on a three by Simaru Fields with 6:25 to play, but the Buckeyes finally put them away with a 7-0 scoring run to take a 64-41 lead with 3:56 to go in the game on a free throw by Petty. Ohio State's bench players wrapped up the 70-47 win with a solid stretch in the game's last four minutes.

Petty missed only two shots in her

24-point night, going 11 of 13 from the floor, and she also grabbed a game-high 11 rebounds, while Jaloni Cambridge made 6 of 14 shots to finish the game with 15 points and a game-high six assists.

The Buckeyes made 27 of 62 field-goal attempts, good for a 43.5 percentage, but they didn't make a single three-point field goal the entire game, finishing the game 0 of 11 from beyond the arc.

Ohio State's defense had another solid performance forcing Old Dominion into 28 turnovers and 18-of-53 shooting (34.0 percent). The Monarchs were led by Fields, a junior guard, and senior forward Brenda Fontana, who scored 11 points each.

OSU Blasts Utah State With Second-Quarter Run

Sparked by a lengthy second-quarter run, Ohio State picked up its second blowout win of the Daytona Beach Classic on Friday, which was even more convincing than its efforts in its previous win.

The Buckeyes wasted no time in taking a sizable advantage over the Aggies. Led by a great start from Petty, who scored six points in the game's first 2:45, Ohio State scored the first 11 points of the game. Utah State answered with a 7-0 scoring run over the next 2:02 to trim Ohio State's lead to 11-7 with 4:47 remaining.

After the 0-for-11 outing against Old Dominion, Gray knocked down the Buckeyes' first three-pointer since the team's win over Bowling Green on Nov. 24 at 4:34 to extend Ohio State's lead to 14-7.

Bench players Elsa Lemmila, Ava Watson and Madison Greene gave the team good minutes by combining for six points to increase the Ohio State lead to 22-13 at the end of the first quarter.

Ohio State had one of its most dominant quarters of the season in the second period. The Buckeyes' 23-5 performance was highlighted by a 21-0 scoring run which lasted 7:23 and left the score at 43-15 with 2:43 left before the break.

Jaloni Cambridge and Thierry combined for 11 points in the run that lasted the majority of the second quarter, while the defense completely stifled the Aggies, allowing them to make only two field goals for the entire second quarter on 14 shots. The efficient 10 minutes allowed the Buckeyes to take a 45-18 lead into the half.

Ohio State continued to balloon the lead in the third quarter to 58-23, with a 13-5 scoring run over the first 3:32. The Buckeyes were led by Gray on the run, who knocked down her third three-pointer of the game and connected on two free throws.

The Aggies responded with a 9-0 scoring run of their own, cutting Ohio State's lead back to 26, 58-32, with 4:14 left in the period on a Carlie Latta three-pointer, but Lemmila helped the Buckeyes score the final eight points of the third quarter with a pair of baskets to lead 68-35.

Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff still put the starters back on the court to begin the fourth quarter, but Thierry and Gray were subbed out of the game at 7:06 and Petty and Jaloni Cambridge were out of the game with over five minutes to go holding a

79-41 lead.

Ohio State was led in scoring by Petty for the second straight game, scoring 17 points on 8-of-12 shooting and adding a game-high nine rebounds, and Gray, who also scored 17 points. Gray shot 5 of 7 from the field, including 3 of 3 from three-point range, and grabbed five rebounds.

Ohio State shot 43.0 percent as a team on 34-of-79 shooting.

Kennedy Cambridge led the Buckeyes with five assists in the game, and Jaloni Cambridge had five steals to go with her 13 points to help force the 36 Aggie turnovers.

The Aggies shot 18 of 54 from the field (33.3 percent) and 9 of 26 from three-point range (34.6 percent). Utah State was led by junior guard Mia Tarver, who had the team high in points with 12 on 4-of-13 shooting to go along with three rebounds. Taliyah Logwood was also in double figures with 11.

Ohio State will play three games before BSB next goes to press, first matching up against Illinois on Dec. 8 (4 p.m., BTN) for its first Big Ten game. The Buckeyes will then host both Ball State on Dec. 10 (6 p.m., B1G+) and Youngstown State on Dec. 14 (11 a.m., B1G+).

Ohio State 87, Utah State 51

Ohio State 87, Utah State 51										
Nov. 29, 2024										
Ocean Center • Daytona Beach, Fla.										
	1	2	3	4	F					
Ohio State (7-0)	22	23	23	19	87					
Utah State (1-6)	13	5	17	16	51					
Ohio State	Total	FT	Reb.							
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Petty	23	8-12	1-3	5-4	2	0	17			
Gray	22	5-7	4-4	1-4	1	0	17			
J. Cambridge	25	5-15	2-4	2-4	4	0	13			
Thierry	25	4-11	0-2	5-3	2	2	8			
K. Cambridge	29	3-8	1-1	3-1	5	1	7			
Lemmila	17	4-7	3-4	2-3	1	2	11			
Greene	15	2-5	2-3	0-1	1	0	6			
Watson	25	1-8	2-2	1-4	2	1	4			
Walker	19	2-6	0-0	1-2	2	0	4			
Totals	200	34-79	15-23	22-29	20	6	87			
Percentages: FG: 43.0%. FT: 65.2%. Three-point field goals: 4-14. (Watson 0-3, J. Cambridge 1-3, Gray 3-3, K. Cambridge 0-2). Team rebounds: 5. Blocked shots: 5 (Greene 2, Petty, Lemmila, Walker). Turnovers: 19 (J. Cambridge 4, Thierry 4, Petty 3, Watson 3, Gray, Lemmila, Greene). Steals: 22 (J. Cambridge 5, Watson 4, Walker 3, Gray 2, K. Cambridge 2, Lemmila 2, Greene 2, Petty, Thierry).										
Utah State	Total	FT	Reb.							
	Min	M-A	M-A	O-D	A	PF	Pts.			
Tarver	29	4-13	0-0	0-3	1	4	12			
Sene	19	3-3	0-0	1-6	0	4	6			
Stubbs	28	1-11	0-0	0-3	4	2	2			
Livingston	21	1-1	0-0	0-0	3	0	2			
Heaton	21	0-4	2-2	1-3	0	2	2			
Logwood	20	5-7	0-0	0-3	2	4	11			
Latta	24	3-5	0-0	0-1	1	0	9			
Tanedo	7	0-2	4-4	0-1	0	1	4			
Skelton	12	1-5	0-0	0-1	0	0	3			
Johnson	8	0-2	0-0	0-3	0	1	0			
Smith	5	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0			
Suguturaga	3	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0			
Banks	3	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	2	0			
Totals	200	18-54	6-6	6-27	11	21	51			
Percentages: FG: 33.3%. FT: 100%. Three-point field goals: 9-26 (Tarver 4-7, Stubbs 0-5, Skelton 1-5, Latta 3-4, Heaton 0-2, Tanedo 0-1, Johnson 0-1, Logwood 1-1). Team rebounds: 6. Blocked shots: 4 (Livingston, Heaton, Logwood, Johnson). Turnovers: 36 (Tarver 7, Latta 7, Livingston 5, Heaton 4, Stubbs 3, Logwood 3, Sene 2, Tanedo 3, Smith, Banks). Steals: 10 (Tarver 2, Latta 2, Tanedo 2, Sene, Logwood, Skelton, Johnson). Officials: Nicole Leon, Xiomara Cruz-Johnson, Mark Berger, Attendance: 135										

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BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL (10-2, 7-2)

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, W 31-7; **23** INDIANA, W 38-15; **30** MICHIGAN, L 13-10.

MEN'S BASKETBALL (5-2)

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, W 81-47; **15** at Texas A&M, L 78-64; **19** EVANSVILLE, W 80-30; **22** CAMPBELL, W 104-60; **25** GREEN BAY, W 102-69; **29** PITTSBURGH, L 91-90 (OT).

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** 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 (7-0)

Nov. 5 CLEVELAND STATE, W 104-69; **12** CHARLOTTE, W 94-53; **17** at Belmont, W 67-63; **20** at Ohio, W 106-42; **24** BOWLING GREEN, W 96-53; **28** vs. Old Dominion at Daytona Beach Classic, Daytona Beach, Fla., W 70-47; **29** vs. Utah State at Daytona Beach Classic, Daytona Beach, Fla., W 87-51.

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, Men 8th/31, Women 5th/32; **23** NCAA Championships at Madison, Wis., Men 8th/31; Women NTS.

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, Men 2-4, Women 2-4.

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.

MEN'S ICE HOCKEY (9-4-1, 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, W 5-2, W 3-2; **29-30** at Princeton, L 3-1; L 3-1.

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 (13-4-2, 8-4-2)

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, L 4-2; W 3-2; **22-23** at Minnesota State, W 2-1; L 4-1.

Dec. 2 at Mercyhurst, PPD.

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 (15-1-4, 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 vs. Washington, W 3-1; **17** Big Ten Tournament finals vs Michigan, W 1-0; **24** NCAA TOURNAMENT VS. WESTERN MICHIGAN, W 2-1.

Dec. 1 NCAA Tournament vs. Stanford W 0-0 (4-2 PK); **7** NCAA Tournament Quarterfinals vs. Wake Forest.

WOMEN'S SOCCER (14-6-3, 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; **15** NCAA TOURNAMENT vs. JAMES MADISON, W 4-1; **22** NCAA Tournament at Winston-Salem, N.C., vs. Auburn, W 2-1; **24** NCAA Tournament at Winston-Salem, N.C., vs. Wake Forest, 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, 3rd/2,164 PTS.

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, 2nd/2,413.50 PTS.

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, NTS.

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, NTS.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL (14-16, 7-13)

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, L 3-1; **16** RUTGERS, W 3-0; **22** WASHINGTON, W 3-0; **24** INDIANA, W 3-2; **27** at Wisconsin, L 3-2; **29** at Minnesota, L 3-1.

WRESTLING (3-0)

Nov. 3 Clarion Open at Clarion, Pa., NTS; **14** UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT CHATTANOOGA, W 36-6; **17** at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania W 40-4; **24** HOFSTRA, W 38-6.

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.



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Defenseman Hansen-Bukata Learning As He Goes

Aiden Hansen-Bukata knew a little bit about Big Ten hockey from afar while playing for Rochester Institute of Technology. What he didn't comprehend was the scope of Ohio State in terms of stature and magnitude of the campus and enrollment.

IN THE CREASE Craig Merz

The graduate transfer defenseman is enjoying his lone season with the Buckeyes and through Nov. 30 had one goal and 10 assists in 14 games.

Hansen-Bukata was also named an alternate captain in October.

"It's obviously a huge honor, not something I really saw coming or thought was in the cards for me, but I'm very honored and privileged to do it and want to do it to the best of my ability," he said.

Despite Hansen-Bukata just coming into the program, Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik was not surprised the transfer was chosen, noting he's played more than 140 games in his college career.

"The guy comes in with a lot of experience, played national tournaments, been a leader on his team, a captain on his team (at RIT). I think those things are invaluable," Rohlik said. "I think he brings a calmness. He's played a ton of minutes where he was, and that's all I'm asking him to do here, come in be a good leader, be a good presence. He's got a good track record and proved himself there."

Hansen-Bukata won the 2023 Atlantic Hockey Best Defenseman award and was first-team All-Atlantic Hockey that season, and he was named to the second team in 2024. He was also a 2024 All-American Scholar.

His familiarity with the Big Ten prior

to the season was playing several times against Notre Dame. He immediately noticed a difference in the style of play.

"The play is a quicker, more high-paced," he said. "You're not just making that first pass option. You've got to see the play develop a little bit more. It took time to adjust. Now that I've seen more of the Big Ten, the adjustment is easier."

When asked if anything surprised him about Columbus, he had a quick response.

"How hot it was during the summer kind of threw me off because I packed all my sweats and my jeans and stuff thinking it would be a little colder," he said. "That and just the sheer size of the campus, just how many people are always active out on campus, out in the Oval."

"I have night classes Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, all at 7. I usually walk there, because I grab a coffee before, but it's like 6 o'clock on campus and still there's just so many people. I can't get that out of my head. It's insane compared to RIT. If you're there past 5 or 6 o'clock you see a few people. But here, it's incredible."

He also noticed how opposing teams get psyched when they see the words "Ohio State" on a uniform chest.

"I didn't think I really realized it until a couple of my family members came out a couple weeks ago and they were like, 'Hey, this is a big name. This is a big school. It's a big brand,'" he said.

Hansen-Bukata got a degree in communications from RIT and is working toward another in sports coaching with postgraduate plans to remain involved in sports.

"Coaching, reffing, announcing, whatever," he said.

He did some play-by-play for RIT baseball games last spring.

"I wouldn't look up that tape, but it was a fun experience," Hansen-Bukata said.

Growing up in Delta, British Columbia, he was a Seattle Mariners fan. He started playing baseball at age 4 and years later

was the catcher for the three-time British Columbia provincial junior men's champions.

"I loved the Mariners," he said. "I went there as a kid with my dad and my mom a bunch. And being a teenager, I'd go down there with my buddies all the time too. It's just a great atmosphere. That's where I fell in love with baseball."

Ahead Of Schedule

Sophomore goalie Kristoffer Eberly made his sixth start of the season at Princeton on Nov. 29 to mark a milestone of sorts.

As a freshman, he did not make his debut until relieving Logan Terness in the third period at Wisconsin on Dec. 2. He entered at the start of the second period vs. Minnesota on Dec. 8 before making his first start the next night. He didn't record a win until Dec. 30.

Eberly this season won his first five starts with one shutout before losing 3-1 to Princeton on Nov. 29. He credits the defensemen for his success.

"They've been really good. They've obviously been making my job a lot easier," he said. "I'm really happy with all the guys when they are blocking shots."

He's been in a rotation with Terness the past six series, meaning he plays once a week.

"Ultimately, I think the big thing is to support my goalie partner," Eberly said. "I think battling with each other helps out a lot. I just try to focus on breathing, staying in the moment and then be ready when my time comes."

Terness is in his second season with the Buckeyes after transferring from Connecticut of Hockey East. He's finding his second season smoother in the Big Ten and, like Hansen-Bukata, getting used to the conference.

"Hockey East was a lot grittier, just a lot of shots from traffic in front of the net and from the point," Terness said. "The Big Ten's a little more run and gun down low."

"So I think that was just an adjustment for me to make last year, and once I kind of figured it out and got comfortable, it made a big difference."

Terness, who is undrafted, attended the prospects camp for the Columbus Blue Jackets in July and enjoyed being around some of the team's young draftees.

"I looked at how hard everybody works but also the extra stuff that guys did that shows why they are there," he said. "I

think I can bring that kind of mentality into our group to push us over the edge to be that much better of a team."

No Taming Tigers

The No. 12 Buckeyes (9-4-1) ended six straight road games on a sour note after dropping consecutive 3-1 results to Princeton (3-4-1) on Nov. 29 and 30.

OSU lost the opener at Hobey Baker Rink in Princeton, N.J., to end a 13-game (11-0-2) unbeaten streak vs. nonconference opponents in the regular season since the last loss on Nov. 26, 2022, at Long Island University.

Princeton took a 2-0 lead on a power-play goal with 7.7 seconds left in the second period. Joe Dunlap cut the deficit to 2-1 at 12:59 of the third, but a late power-play score provided the final margin. Eberly made 20 saves.

It was more of the same the next night. The Tigers scored 13 seconds into the third followed by another goal at 9:14. They extended the lead at 12:40 with a shorthanded goal during a major OSU power play.

Dunlap scored his second of the series at 13:15 during a power play. Damien Carfagna and Patrick Guzzo assisted on both goals. Terness made 19 saves.

Riley Good

Alaska Anchorage transfer Riley Thompson is the *Varsity Club Icer of the Month* for November. The sophomore from Ottawa, Ontario, had 11 points (three goals, eight assists) in eight games for the month.

He had two assists vs. Lake Superior State on Nov. 1 and a goal and three assists the next night. In a sweep at Lindenwood on Nov. 15-16, Thompson combined for five points (two goals, three assists).

He leads the Buckeyes in scoring with five goals and 10 assists for 15 points in 14 games.

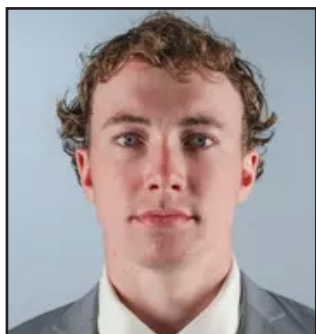
Next

The Buckeyes close out the calendar year with a pair of Big Ten opponents coming to Value City Arena.

Penn State plays Dec. 5 at 7:30 p.m. and Dec. 6 at 7 p.m. OSU hosts Notre Dame on Dec. 13 and 14 at 7 p.m. for each.

For complete recaps of the Princeton series go to the BuckeyeSports.com website, free to all Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscribers.

VARSITY CLUB ICER OF THE MONTH For March



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Instead Of Gold Pants, Devastation and Disbelief

This was the year the Buckeyes were to get even. Some of the very best players from a year ago decided to stay their extra year in part to get back at the spoilers from up North, play for a Big Ten championship and possibly more, and finally earn a pair of those coveted "gold pants." The Maize and Blue had sent a ton of players from their 2023 squad to the NFL, including a very good quarterback and some physical offensive and defensive linemen. Everything was within the grasp of the men in scarlet and gray for 2024.

COACH'S CORNER Bill Conley

The Buckeyes had slipped only once in a tough contest at Oregon. They would get another shot at the Ducks in Indianapolis with a victory over Michigan. The Buckeyes were statistically superior to the Wolverines in every offensive and defensive category. Michigan had lost five games already, had no shot at the conference championship, and had no chance to make the 12-team College Football Playoff. They were playing to simply make it four victories in a row over their main rivals and salvage a season that had been, up until Nov. 30, a disappointment.

Only a complete letdown by the Buckeyes could spoil the day of revenge on the team that had made their lives miserable for three straight seasons. Ryan Day had never lost a game to an unranked opponent, and surely it couldn't happen against a Michigan team that was struggling this season. But as we saw, the football gods aren't always fair. The Buckeyes played their worst game of the season, struggling on offense, at times on defense, and for sure in the kicking game.

Day would suffer that loss to an unranked opponent, and his offense which had been averaging nearly 38 points per game seemed to lack creativity, efficiency and explosiveness. The Buckeye defense would play well but not quite well enough. The special teams units that had shown such promise the past few games took a huge step backward with poor punts and two missed field goals for the afternoon.

The coaching staff will take harsh criticism for the team's performance again in the regular-season finale. Their job security and the future of their boss may be in question. The disappointment for the players must be heartbreaking. All the pain and uncertainty due to a subpar performance for 3½ hours on a Saturday afternoon in November. The one thing that may take some of the sting out of the devastating loss would be to go out and win the rest, all the rest. Win the national championship!

Lack of Offense Adjustments

The Buckeyes entered the game against their archrival as the third-ranked team in the Big Ten in total offense. In

the 11 games prior, the Ohio State offense had averaged 439.1 yards per game and scored an average of 27 more points per game than their opponents. The Ryan Day and Chip Kelly offense had shown the ability to move the ball up and down the field against its opponents with a well-balanced ground and air attack. After all, no offense in the country had a one-two threat at the running back position more dangerous than TreVeyon Henderson and Quinshon Judkins. Put those two on the field with, undoubtedly, the best stable of receivers in the nation in Emeka Egbuka, Carnell Tate, Brandon Inniss and frosh phenom Jeremiah Smith, and the Buckeye offense seemed unstoppable. This group of offensively skilled players has speed, agility, toughness and explosiveness that few defenses could hold up against.

The Buckeyes were going against a Michigan defense that was talented, but not as talented as the last three years. The Wolverine defense was strong against the run but ranked 12th in the conference in pass defense, giving up 222.3 yards per game in the air. To go along with their vulnerability in pass defense, their very best defensive back, Will Johnson, was out for the season. Even if the run game wasn't clicking for the Buckeyes, the passing game could surely make up for it.

It became apparent early in the game that the injury-prone Buckeye offensive line couldn't knock the talented Michigan defense off the line of scrimmage. Led by defensive tackles Mason Graham and Kenneth Grant, the Michigan defensive front, for the fourth year in a row, proved to be more physical than the Buckeyes. The offensive staff of the Buckeyes called 14 first-down runs in the game, and only four resulted in a gain of 5 yards or more. The other 10 averaged just 2 yards per rush. On the other hand, there were 11 first-down passes called. Of the 11 attempts, six were complete for a total of 58 yards, four were incomplete, one of the completions was for a touchdown, and the other pass drew an interference call from the Michigan defense. The lack of first-down production, especially running the football, put the offense behind the chains most of the day, leading to too many long-yardage second downs. The Buckeye offense faced second-and-at least 10 yards to go 10 times on Nov. 30. This lack of first-down execution and production enabled the Michigan defense to play pass defense without worrying about having to support the run.

The Buckeye offense seemed most dynamic and successful when running at a fast tempo with a passing emphasis as it did just before halftime, going 75 yards in just nine plays, eight of which were pass plays and just one run. The result was the only Ohio State touchdown of the day.

For the first time this season, the Buckeyes went scoreless in the second half, and the team that was averaging 37.8 points per game put up just 10 for the entire day. Once again Michigan flexed its muscles and won the battle in the trenches, which is both embarrassing and disheartening.

Howard Struggled

Will Howard has been a real plus for the Ohio State program in all ways since his arrival from Kansas State. He has been an excellent field general and had scored 33 touchdowns, 26 via the pass and seven by way of the run, going into "The Game." He has been a team guy and has performed admirably. Unfortunately, for him and Buckeye Nation, Nov. 30 was not one of his best performances. He threw well below his nation-leading completion percentage, going just 19 of 33 with two interceptions. His first interception was deep in Ohio State territory leading to Michigan's only touchdown. He took a nasty hit to the head in the second quarter and seemed off rhythm afterward. A very sad day for a quarterback who was having a fairytale-like season.

Defense Solid

Jim Knowles and his defensive staff had a sound game plan against TTUN. The "Silver Bullets" played well enough to win the game by allowing the Wolverines just 234 total yards, 65.7 yards below their average. The Buckeye defense also allowed Michigan just 62 yards in the air along with getting two interceptions. One of those interceptions was by safety Caleb Downs and the other by defensive end Jack Sawyer at the Ohio State goal line to end a Wolverine drive and give the Buck-

eye offense one more try. Michigan had only one touchdown and 13 points total for the game, with the touchdown being set up by an Ohio State offensive turnover.

The defensive coaches have been able to make the needed adjustments throughout the season which has resulted in the Buckeyes having one of the very best defenses in the country. The only thing that marred their performance in the loss was giving up two long drives in the second half, resulting in three points for the rivals but eating up valuable possession time in favor of the Wolverines. Even though the Buckeyes would get more first downs and run one more play than Michigan, they would have the football for more than seven minutes less than the Wolverines.

Postgame Brawl Embarrassing

The ugly melee after the game was a black eye for college football, and it was preventable. Michigan head coach Sherone Moore should never have allowed his players to show such disrespect to an opponent and its facilities when playing on the road. Obviously, he and his staff had never communicated that to their players ahead of time. Buckeye players made a natural response to defend their turf. In reality, the only thing that would have kept the whole situation from occurring would have been a Buckeye victory.

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Offensive Overhaul Needed For OSU In CFP

Tear up the offensive play-calling sheet and start over.

The Buckeyes have three weeks to get ready for the playoffs and salvage the season. Otherwise, an incredible defense and an incredible collection of playmakers on offense will go to waste.

EXNER POINT

Rich Exner

We heard so much about the inventive offense of Chip Kelly, but as the regular season panned out, it did not materialize. Creative play calling? I've missed it if that's been the case this year.

Coming up with ways to put the playmakers in space to strike at any time for quick sixes? Not so as the season wore on.

And it came to a head against Michigan – a Michigan team that came into the game ranked 36th in the nation in points allowed. The play calling was perplexing at times, at many times.

The running game was not going anywhere. Quinshon Judkins had 46 yards on 12 carries (with 17 yards coming on one run). TreVeyon Henderson totaled 21 yards on 10 carries. It was very clear Ohio State could not run the ball against Michigan. Yet,

the Buckeyes kept trying, and that made passing more difficult.

Consider when the Buckeyes got the ball at their own 12-yard-line with 7:46 to go in a 10-10 game. Run, incomplete pass, run and punt. Michigan gets the ball and drives for the winning field goal.

Or how about the drive before that one late in the third quarter? The Buckeyes get the ball at the Wolverines' 16-yard-line. Run, short completion, run, missed field goal.

Or the drive before that midway through the third quarter. Three runs, a short complete pass and two more runs before an interception.

Let's add it up. On the last three drives (save for the last-gasp attempt as time was running out), Ohio State ran nine times and passed four times, and the Buckeyes had no points to show for it nor a sustained drive.

So here's the lesson.

Scrap any notion of using the run to set up the pass. This is a team – largely due to the decimation by injury of the offensive line – that must use a short, quick passing game to set up the run.

I know. Will Howard did not have a good day throwing the football. But the best option for this team is quick passing downfield, capitalizing on Howard's accuracy on those types of plays while avoiding long-developing pass plays that would expose him to sacks. And those plays can be more effective on first-and-10 instead of second-and-long.

Put the ball in the dynamic hands on

offense in open space. Don't try to drive it down the throat of the defense when there is no evidence you can do so.

The Buckeyes can be dangerous, very dangerous, by getting the ball to Jeremiah Smith, Emeka Egbuka, Carnell Tate, Henderson and Judkins in open space.

They're threats to make big plays, but not – as proven – by jamming the ball into the line with hopes of finding nice holes for traditional running plays. Against weak opponents, yes. But not against quality opponents. Maybe that would have worked if Ohio State didn't have so many injuries on the line. But the injuries are weeks old.

The time for a changing of attitude has passed.

Consider not only the Michigan game, but what led up to the Michigan game.

Northwestern, which entered the final week of the regular season ranked 73rd nationally in points allowed, led Ohio State, 7-0, early in the second quarter.

The Buckeyes didn't take the lead on Northwestern until blocking a punt late in the first half. It wasn't the offense but a blocked punt that put OSU in control of the game after nearly a half of football.

Then there was the Indiana game. Indiana led 7-0, until midway through the second quarter. What turned the game in Ohio State's favor? The Indiana punter dropped a snap and turned the ball over to the Buckeyes at the 7-yard-line to set up the go-ahead score, 14-7.

Then it was Caleb Downs who returned a punt 79 yards for a TD and a 21-7 lead early in the second half.

Things were clearly wrong with the Ohio State offense before the Michigan game, masked by a combination of fortunate breaks and weak opponents.

Heading into the playoffs, this ranks as the second-lowest-scoring Ohio State team in the combined Urban Meyer/Ryan Day era that goes back to 2012.

The Buckeyes are averaging 35.5 points a game. Worse yet, the second half of the season has included games of scoring just 21 against Nebraska, 20 against Penn State and now 10 against Michigan.

The only team in the Meyer/Day area with a lower output was the 2023 squad, which ranked 45th nationally in points scored at 30.5 a game. Those results led to a new quarterback and the hiring of Kelly as offensive coordinator.

Before then, the Buckeyes averaged better than 40 points a game for six straight seasons, including a nation-leading 45.7 points a game in 2021 and a nation's second-best 44.2 points a game in 2022.

I think the talent is still on this Ohio State team to score in big ways. It just has to be done differently and in more creative

ways.

Oregon scored 38 against Michigan. Texas scored 31. Ohio State certainly should have been able to do better than 10, but instead, another solid defensive performance was wasted.

What's the risk in blowing up the play-calling tendencies and taking on a new style of offense for the postseason?

The Top 12

The post-Michigan edition of the college football playoff rankings were not available at this writing, but it should be safe to say Ohio State is in line for a home playoff game, as one of the top four non-champions.

I'm figuring Ohio State will be no lower than seventh this week, judging by how the committee has handled things.

Ohio State, Notre Dame, the SEC championship game loser, and either Tennessee or Penn State likely will have home games in the playoffs as seeds five through eight. But if Penn State upsets Oregon, Oregon will get one of those home games.

Here's how I see the top 12 this week, my opinion, not my projection of what the committee will do:

1. Oregon (12-0) – No discussion here.
2. Texas (11-1) – Again, no discussion.
3. Ohio State (10-2) – Doubt many Buckeye fans felt this way leaving the stadium. But step back and look at the season. OSU handed both Penn State and Indiana their only losses. And on their bad days, the Buckeyes lost by one-point to now top-ranked Oregon and, as bad as the result tasted, by just three to Michigan.
4. Penn State (11-1) – Better record than Ohio State but lost head-to-head and lacking the same quality wins as the Buckeyes.
5. Notre Dame (11-1) – Looking good with a weak schedule. That loss to Northern Illinois never goes away.
6. Georgia (10-2) – No way should the Bulldogs have beaten Georgia Tech, but they did. And now on to the SEC title game.
7. Tennessee (10-2) – Sitting at home like the Buckeyes on championship weekend.
8. SMU (11-1) – Only blemish a three-point loss to BYU. Win the SEC title game and the Mustangs are in. Lose, and they probably bump Miami out.
9. Indiana (11-1) – Lacking a signature win but still 11-1.
10. Boise State (11-1) – This team is still a mystery to me. Not convinced Boise can play with the big boys.
11. Miami (10-2) – Won't be helped by sitting at home on championship weekend after losing to Kyle McCord and Syracuse.
12. Whoever wins the Big 12, Iowa State or Arizona State.









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Day's Hot Seat Gets Hotter By The Day

THE VIEW FROM 15TH & HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

As Ohio State was preparing for what was going to be its dominant victory over rival Michigan, I would go over in my mind the overwhelming depth and talent on the Buckeye defense, the wealth of elite receivers in Brian Hartline's room and the dynamic running duo of Quinshon Judkins and TreVeyon Henderson at running back. Then there was the offensive ringleader in quarterback Will Howard. This wealth of talent was directed by coaching superstar coordinators Chip Kelly on offense and Jim Knowles on defense. The Buckeyes were stacked and facing a Michigan team in the midst of a down year.

What could go wrong? As it turned out, plenty.

As the game started to play out, I realized there was one position group I hadn't really thought about while appreciating the talent the Buckeyes would trot out – had forgotten about, actually – and that was the offensive line. Maybe I had been lulled into a false sense of security after the patchwork Buckeye offensive line held its own against upstart Indiana. But I didn't give it much thought. And as the game started to play out, I remembered not only Ohio State's line, but that the strength of this subpar Michigan team was its defensive line.

Now I was beginning to realize that this combination of opposing lines was a potential recipe for disaster, which it proved to be in the 13-10 Michigan victory. Caught up in the moment, I had completely forgotten that Ohio State-Michigan games are always won in the trenches, particularly when the late November temperatures start to drop.

But even with that patchwork line, playing without Josh Simmons and Seth McLaughlin, I figured with all that firepower on that side of the ball, the Buckeyes, with the help of the defense, should have been able to win the day.

Now before I continue, I have to caution that I am always uncomfortable questioning play-calling (though like any columnist I do it from time to time) because the lowliest of offensive coordinators knows far more than me. And at Ohio State we are talking Kelly, acknowledged as a brilliant offensive mind.

But I'm watching the game, and I keep thinking of the famous definition of insanity. "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

I kept waiting for Kelly to do something different to open up the offense, but the Buckeyes just kept pounding the ball up the middle with little success. In the end the superstar tandem of Judkins and Henderson rushed 22 times for 67 yards and a modest 3.1-yard average. Judkins had a slightly higher – but still modest – average of 3.8 yards a carry. But as someone pointed out elsewhere in this issue, 42 of Judkins' yards came on three carries. Take those away, and he averaged 0.4 yards on his other carries and the average for the two drops to 1.3.

Now I wasn't down on the field, so I don't know how the wind was swirling, but with guys like Emeka Egbuka, Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate available, why not try something different? Or if you were insistent on rushing Judkins and Henderson, why not try to use them a little differently? On Ohio State's first possession of the second half, Howard got a screen pass to Henderson that the speedster took 24 yards. There are other ways to use Judkins and Henderson than having them and the line go mano a mano with the heart and strength of the Michigan defense over and over again with no different result.

By the way, on Ohio State's lone touchdown drive, Howard was 6 for 8 including the 10-yard scoring pass to a wide-open Smith. So the pass did work. The one running play on the scoring

drive went for 2 yards.

Short of Howard throwing another interception, could things on the offense have been any worse if they took to the air, or simply shook up the run game a little bit?

But there was something else at play in this loss.

The game started encouragingly enough for the Buckeyes when they held the Wolverines to six plays and 25 yards and just one first down on their first possession – this in contrast to the several games this season where the Buckeye defense allowed lesser opponents to march up and down the field in the early going. Then the Buckeyes got points, three of them, on their first possession. Not a bad start, though there was a harbinger of things to come on the drive.

The Buckeyes got the ball at the U-M 16 with a first down after a Michigan pass-interference call. Instead of going for the kill, the Buckeyes ran the ball on first and second down, leaving them facing a third-and-5, and Howard threw an incomplete pass to set up Jayden Fielding's only success of the afternoon from 29 yards out.

When Michigan got the ball back, it marched 72 yards – sparked by a 29-yard run by reserve running quarterback Alex Orji (if even I knew they brought him in to run the ball, you'd think the Buckeye defense would have paid a little better attention to him) – to the Buckeye 3. But Caleb Downs and Tyleik Williams stoned Kaleb Mullings for no gain on fourth-and-1 and things were still looking pretty good for the Buckeyes.

That's when the wheels started to fall off. In the shadow of their own goalposts, I can see why Kelly would elect to run the ball on first and second down to try to get some running room, but they netted a whopping 1 yard, forcing Howard to pass on third-and-9, and he promptly threw an interception, setting up an easy touchdown and a 7-3 lead for Michigan.

Things were still looking pretty good when the Buckeyes drove 55 yards to set up Fielding's first miss of the game. Ohio State had first down at the Michigan 23 and ran on first down, ran again on second down, got to redo second down after an offside penalty by the Wolverines and ran again. The two runs that counted both went for 1-yard losses, and even with the penalty, Howard faced a third-and-7 that he failed to convert with a pass to Tate, and Fielding missed his kick.

The Buckeyes held again, forcing a three-and-out, but they got the bad end of a punt exchange to give the Wolverines the ball back at the OSU 39. The defense held again, but it was close enough for Dominic Zvada to nail a 54-yarder, and Michigan led 10-3.

That's when Kelly/Day finally loosened up, taking to the air as part of a two-minute drill and tying the game at 10 with 30 seconds left.

With the Buckeyes getting the ball to start the second half and the score tied, the defense playing well, and Ohio State having achieved some success in the passing game, I felt pretty good.

Which brings me to the point I want to make about "something else at play" in the loss.

Henderson set the Buckeyes up in an immediate hole by bringing the kickoff out to only the 6. Of course, the Buckeyes ran on first and second down, netting 4, but Howard converted on a 9-yard pass to Egbuka, and the Buckeyes marched all the way to the U-M 38 before being forced to punt.

On OSU's next drive Howard threw an

interception. The Buckeyes intercepted a pass of their own and took over at the U-M 16, but after two runs and a pass to Gee Scott Jr. netted zero total yards, Fielding missed another field goal. Now we were heading into the fourth quarter with the game still tied and the clock was ticking.

Here's where I make my point.

I lived through the Cooper years. I saw the same thing from the Michigan vantage point in the Tressel/Urban years. When you are in an extended rivalry losing streak like Ohio State is now, you are not just battling your rivals, but you are battling the streak.

You know the Buckeyes are starting to get uptight. Michigan, on the other hand, has absolutely nothing to lose. If they fall to the Buckeyes, it was expected. They're loose. The Buckeyes end up with only one legitimate possession in the final quarter, and starting with a 5-yard run by Henderson, they go three-and-out.

The Buckeye defense, stout all afternoon, is starting to falter, and Team Buckeye is getting more nervous.

I want to make a comparison between this year's Michigan game and last year's and maybe put a little bit of blame on Knowles as well. Don't forget the mad scientist is 0-3 against Michigan.

A lot of people tend to blame Kyle McCord for losing last year's Michigan game because of the interception he threw to secure the U-M victory. I have always blamed the defense for allowing the Wolverines to eat up 7:00 before kicking a field goal to make it 30-24 Michigan, leaving McCord only 1:00 to try to win the game, with everyone knowing he was going to have to pass. Knowles' defense allowed three first downs on the drive. A stop anywhere on the drive might have given McCord enough time to calmly win the game.

Fast-forward to this year.

Knowles' defense gives up drives of 15 plays for 77 yards and 9:10 and 11 plays for 57 yards and 5:28 to set up the winning field goal. How is Howard supposed to win the game if the Wolverines have the ball, which they did for 13:03 of the stanza? The visitors converted nine first downs on those two possessions. The biggest conversion of that group may have been when Mullings appeared to be stopped on a crucial third-and-6 and somehow burst free for a 27-yard first-down run. Game, set, match. Howard ends up with 45 seconds and no timeouts to try to win the game.

There was one bright moment on defense in the fourth quarter, when Jack Sawyer ended a potential U-M scoring march at the goal line. I'm such a sap I was hoping for a storybook ending with Sawyer, Mr. Beat Michigan, setting up Ohio State's winning touchdown. But in some ways, Ohio State's fate had already been sealed when the Wolverines used that 9:10 before giving up the ball to Sawyer. The Buckeyes responded to Sawyer's big play by rushing twice for 9 yards as part of a three-and out before punting the ball away.

One last thing about the Buckeyes losing control of the game because of the pressure to win it.

Day had this to say about his team being called for an illegal substitution in the waning moments of the game.

"Because it was moving so fast, there was a little bit of panic going on," he said of the confusion on the field and the sidelines. "Typically, when the group runs on the field, you get a little bit of time to make sure you make that substi-

tution. And that time was very, very fast. So, we had to quickly respond to that, and we didn't (do it) well enough, and we panicked and it cost us."

One thing you never want to hear your coach admit to in your rivalry game is "panic." But that is how intense the pressure the team put on itself to win this game was.

Quick Hitters

- All around college and pro football these days, you hear of kickers who can consistently nail field goals from 50 yards and out. Michigan has one in Dominic Zvada, who drove two daggers into the Buckeyes. Zvada is 17 of 18 this season, including perfect on seven kicks from 50 yards or more.

Ohio State is a recruiting machine. I don't understand why they are unable to find an elite kicker. Noah Ruggles was consistent. He was 37 of 41 in his two years at Ohio State (90.2 percent) but seemed to have a range only out to about 48 yards. I don't know what to say about Fielding, other than he, too, seems to have a range inside 50 yards, and while he was a visible culprit in the loss to Michigan, he was hardly the only culprit, just as, contrary to popular belief, it wasn't Ruggles who lost the Georgia playoff game, though he was out there alone at the end.

I've always believed that with a school as big as Ohio State, there is some kid on the Oval who can consistently connect from 50 yards, so there has got to be such a kid in the portal or on the recruiting trail.

Just think, if the Buckeyes had recruited Zvada out of high school, Ohio State might be the 2022 national champions and own a victory over Michigan this season.

- I was looking forward to seeing Ohio State play Oregon in the Big Ten Championship Game. I think the Buckeyes would be able to beat the Ducks the second time around, especially if Knowles dialed up the pressure like he did against Indiana, resulting in five sacks and a hurry against the Hoosiers. In the earlier loss to Oregon, Ohio State was credited with no sacks. There wouldn't be the type of pressure against the Ducks that there was against the Wolverines.

In case you were wondering, Ohio State had no sacks against Michigan. Quarterback pressure did not appear to be part of Knowles' game plan, but it didn't seem to make a difference, as Davis Warren completed just 9 of 16 passes for only 62 yards and the Buckeyes picked off two passes.

Scheduling Note

This is the final weekly issue of BSB's fall publishing schedule. The next print edition will be mailed Dec. 17. A lot will be happening in the world of college sports between now and then. The football early signing period begins on Dec. 4. The transfer portal opens on Dec. 9. And Ohio State could be preparing for a CFP playoff game. There is no reason to miss any of the latest news between now and the next print BSB. The Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff will be reporting on all the breaking news in real time at the electronic BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB print subscribers.

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