

OCT. 19, 2019 ♦ MICHIGAN AT PENN STATE

Game Info

Site: at Beaver Stadium (106,572)

Kickoff: 7:30 p.m.

Television: ABC

Radio: Michigan/IMG Radio Network (950 AM in the Detroit Area; SiriusXM channel 83) with Dan Dierdorf, Jim Brandstatter and sideline reporter Doug Karsch, a regular contributor to TheWolverine.com.

Series Facts: The Wolverines hold a 14-8 all-time advantage in the series, including a 6-5 edge in State College ... U-M has gone 33-25 in games with a kickoff after 5 p.m., including a 2-3 mark against Penn State in such contests (1-3 at Beaver Stadium) ... Michigan is 3-1 under Jim Harbaugh against Penn State, 1-1 in Happy Valley ... The Nittany Lions enter the contest ranked seventh by both national polls, while the Wolverines check in at No. 16 ... U-M leads the series 6-4 when both teams are nationally ranked.

Previewing Penn State With A Nittany Lion Insider

Austin Fox • TheWolverine

Nate Bauer of BlueWhiteIllustrated swung by TheWolverine.com this week to help break down Penn State's club prior to its matchup with the Michigan Wolverines' football team this weekend.

He explained what Maize and Blue fans should be on the lookout for on Saturday night in Happy Valley, and also revealed how he thinks the game will go by providing his final score prediction at the end.

PENN STATE FOOTBALL'S PROJECTED STARTERS ON OFFENSE

• **Redshirt sophomore QB Sean Clifford** — His 13 touchdown passes are the third most in the Big Ten, while his 64.2 completion percentage is good for fourth in the league. Clifford's 260 passing yards per game, meanwhile, lead the conference, and his 252 rushing yards are the second most on his team.

• **Redshirt sophomore RB Journey Brown** — His 233 rushing yards are actually the third most on the roster, due to the fact that Penn State employs three other running backs on a regular basis (freshmen Noah Cain and Devyn Ford, and sophomore Ricky Slade). Brown rushed for 109 yards in the Sept. 14 win over Pittsburgh, but has actually not surpassed 38 yards in any other game this season.

• **Redshirt sophomore WR K.J. Hamler** — He leads the Nittany Lions in all of the team's major receiving categories, including catches (26), yards (455) and touchdown

receptions (five). The 5-9, 176-pound speedster has been consistently productive for PSU, reeling in at least 61 yards in five of the team's six outings.

• **Sophomore WR Jahan Dotson** — His 261 receiving yards are the second most on the squad and his three TD grabs are tied for second, while his 14 catches check in third. Dotson's 18.6 yards per reception stand also the sixth-best average in the Big Ten.

• **Redshirt freshman WR Justin Shorter** — He has been banged up a bit this year, and has only hauled in eight catches for 100 yards as a result. The former five-star recruit's 6-4, 235-pound stature has a chance to create mismatches in the passing game, though he has yet to compile more than 36 yards in a game this season.

• **Sophomore TE Pat Freiermuth** — He has built off a solid freshman campaign in which he racked up 368 yards and eight scores, hauling in 17 catches for 203 yards and three touchdowns this time around. Freiermuth's 203 yards are actually the third most in the Big Ten among tight ends, trailing only Purdue fifth-year senior Brycen Hopkins' 345 yards and Indiana redshirt sophomore Peyton Hendershot's 256.

• **Redshirt freshman LT Rasheed Walker** — He was rated as the No. 65 player in the country out of high school, and redshirted in 2018 as a freshman at Penn State. Walker has started all six games of the 2019 campaign so far, and is the third-heaviest player on the entire team at 324 pounds.

• **Fifth-year senior LG Steven Gonzalez** — The veteran has been a staple on PSU's offensive line during head coach James Franklin's tenure, having started 32 straight clashes dating back to the start of the 2017 season. Pro Football Focus (PFF) has also rated him as the Nittany Lions' second-best starting offensive lineman, awarding him with a 73.6 overall grade (64 is considered average).

• **Redshirt junior C Michal Menet** — He has also been a mainstay along the Penn State front, starting all six games this year and earning the starting nod in 12 outings last season. Menet was named to the preseason Rimington Trophy (given annually to the nation's best center) watch list, and his 78.9 PFF grade is the highest of the 11 offensive players PSU is projected to start on Saturday night.

• **Redshirt sophomore RG Mike Miranda** — He is one of two new starters on the Nittany Lion O-line (along with Walker), having opened just one career game prior to 2019. Miranda will likely start on Saturday, but is often rotated in and out with fellow redshirt sophomore C.J. Thorpe (the former has played 280 snaps this season, while the latter has seen 207).

• **Redshirt junior RT Will Fries** — His 77.6 mark as a pass blocker is the second best among Penn State's linemen, finishing just behind Gonzalez's 78.4. At 6-6, Fries is tied as the second-tallest player on the Nittany Lions' entire roster.

PENN STATE FOOTBALL'S PROJECTED STARTERS ON DEFENSE

• **Junior DE Yetur Gross-Matos** — After racking up eight sacks and finishing second in the Big Ten with 20 tackles for loss in 2018, Gross-Matos is once again off

to a fabulous start in 2019 with 5.5 of the former and 8.5 of the latter. He leads the club in TFLs and is tied with redshirt junior defensive end Shaka Toney for the team lead in sacks, while his four quarterback hurries are also knotted for the most on defense.

- **Fifth-year senior DT Robert Windsor** — His 86.5 grade is the second best of any PSU defensive player, while his 84.3 mark as a pass rusher is tops among the club's 11 projected starters. Windsor played his best game of the year last week at Iowa, racking up 2.5 TFLs, 1.5 sacks and two quarterback hurries.

- **Redshirt junior DT Antonio Shelton** — He had only made one career start prior to 2019, but has become a key cog in the middle of the Nittany Lion defensive front this year. Shelton's six tackles and 2.5 stops behind the line of scrimmage aren't necessarily eye-popping, but he has also earned a very good 75.9 PFF grade against the run.

- **Redshirt junior DE Shaka Toney** — His 5.5 sacks are tied with Gross-Matos for the team lead, while his six tackles for loss are deadlocked for second. Toney's 85.2 overall tally is the third best on PSU's defense among players who have seen at least 23 snaps this season.

- **Sophomore LB Micah Parsons** — The No. 6 overall player in the country out of high school in the 2018 class has registered six TFLs and 31 tackles so far this year, the latter of which leads the team. Parsons has also logged a 92.0 grade as a run defender, which is obviously incredibly high praise from PFF.

- **Senior LB Cam Brown** — He has played in 43 games since his freshman season of 2016, and was tabbed to the Butkus Award (given to the nation's top linebacker) preseason watch list heading into 2019. Brown has earned a 92.5 PFF mark against the run this season, and an 80.3 tally overall — both are excellent.

- **Fifth-year senior LB Jan Johnson** — He is the highest-rated player on a Penn State defense that has been elite this season (ranks fourth nationally in fewest yards allowed per game), checking in with an 87.9 grade from PFF. The outlet has also rated Johnson as PSU's top tackler, pegging him with an 88.6 mark in that department.

- **Fifth-year senior CB John Reid** — He has been through plenty of turmoil in State College, missing the entire 2017 campaign with injury after starting all 14 games in 2016 as a sophomore. Reid has bounced back nicely, having begun 17 contests and compiled 19 tackles and four pass breakups this season.

- **Junior CB Tariq Castro-Fields** — His 274 snaps are the fourth most on PSU's defense, with he and Reid seldom leaving the field (redshirt freshman Trent Gordon's 131 snaps are the next-highest total at the position). Castro-Fields' five pass breakups lead the team and his 23 tackles check in sixth.

- **Junior S Lamont Wade** — He was rated as a five-star recruit and the No. 11 prospect in the country out of high school in the 2017 class, but did not start a game during his first two years on campus. Wade has opened all six contests this season though, and his 29 tackles are the second most on the team.

- **Fifth-year senior S Garrett Taylor** — The former Michigan commit in high school

has accumulated 27 tackles and two stops behind the line of scrimmage in 2019, while playing 296 snaps (second most on the defense). His PFF grades are actually better against the run than the pass, with the veteran earning a 75.1 tally as a run defender and an 84.2 mark as a tackler.

PENN STATE FOOTBALL'S PROJECTED STARTERS ON SPECIAL TEAMS

- **Sophomore K Jake Pinegar** — Bauer revealed that Pinegar will be the kicker Penn State turns to when it attempts kicks within 50 yards, while redshirt sophomore Jordan Stout will handle any field goals longer than that. Pinegar has made five of his six tries on the season, while Stout has connected on two of his three (including a long of 57).

- **Senior P Blake Gillikin** — He has dropped 15 of his 28 punts inside the opponent's 20-yard line, though his 41.04-yard average is underwhelming (ranks ninth in the Big Ten). Gillikin has also registered five punts that have traveled 50 yards or further, including a long of 62.

PENN STATE FOOTBALL'S BIGGEST STRENGTH ON OFFENSE

“It wasn't present against Iowa's ultimate bend-but-don't-break defense, but explosive plays are Penn State's meal ticket on the offensive side of the ball,” Bauer revealed. “Whether it's K.J. Hamler, Jahan Dotson, Pat Freiermuth, or really any of running backs Journey Brown, Ricky Slade and Devyn Ford, Penn State has pieces that seemingly can break one at any moment.

“Just as a matter of standard practice, Iowa's entire philosophy is to take those big plays away by keeping everything in front of it, so the results Saturday night at Kinnick were just four chunk plays: Hamler's 22-yard touchdown in the second quarter, the 15-yard overturned-touchdown for Freiermuth, and a couple of runs of 12 and 11 yards.”

Penn State's offense has consistently been one of the best units in the country at creating big plays this season, with their 12 plays of 40 yards or more ranking 10th nationally, and their eight plays of at least 50 yards checking in seventh.

The Nittany Lions have racked up five passing plays of 50 yards or more on the year, and three rushing plays over that same distance.

PENN STATE FOOTBALL'S BIGGEST WEAKNESS ON OFFENSE

“The weaknesses for this Penn State team are relative,” the writer began. “The first is that Sean Clifford is still a redshirt sophomore quarterback getting his first taste of this level of football and, at times, it shows. He's been skittish at the start of the games with the most hype surrounding them, so far being Pitt at Beaver Stadium and Iowa last weekend on the road.

“At times on Saturday, he also wasn't helped much by receivers who still have not necessarily asserted themselves outside of Hamler and Dotson.

“The other weakness is something that, at least for the time being, appeared to be resolved at the end of the game against the Hawkeyes when Penn State three times chewed up time of possession in the fourth quarter and closed it out by being steady and successful on the ground.

“In a game that Iowa tried to limit possessions, Penn State produced 24 plays and had 10:23 in time of possession in the fourth quarter including a 2-minute, 31-second possession to run out the clock with a critical three-straight-runs first down to seal it.

“Penn State had not been able to do that to this point in Franklin’s tenure with the program.”

PENN STATE FOOTBALL’S BIGGEST STRENGTH ON DEFENSE

“The defense is designed entirely around first stopping the run, and second being aggressive once opponents abandon the run,” Bauer noted. “Penn State has done an excellent job this season in limiting opponents on the ground, right now ranking No. 3 nationally for rushing defense, and you can see how that effectiveness manifests itself in other areas of the game.

“Specifically, Penn State is also No. 2 nationally in sacks per game with 4.5 per outing through six games.

“This is another outstanding defensive line for Penn State, made even more potent by the fact that it rotates at every position, and its backed by a group of linebackers that have been pretty good at stopping the run and the pass.”

Even more impressive than PSU’s No. 3-ranked rush defense is the fact that it is allowing opponents to average just 1.5 yards per carry against it, which is tops in the nation.

The Nittany Lions have held five of their six foes to 70 rushing yards or fewer, including a season-best minus-19 in the Oct. 5 win over Purdue.

PENN STATE FOOTBALL’S BIGGEST WEAKNESS ON DEFENSE

“Where the [aforementioned] strategy proves itself vulnerable, however, is against good quarterbacks and receivers that can make plays against man coverage,” the insider said. “If a quarterback has the presence to hang in the pocket and deliver a strike to his targets on the perimeter, even when the pocket is collapsing on him, success is out there to be had.

“And that’s one of the areas that Penn State would like to see improvement is that its corners and safeties haven’t been quite as good as they’d prefer at converting the pressure of the front four into more turnovers on the back end.”

PSU’s secondary has allowed 205.8 passing yards per game on the year, which ranks 49th in the country. Opponents have had great success through the air against the Nittany Lion at times, with Pittsburgh shredding the unit for 372 yards on a 68.6 completion percentage.

Iowa found success against it last week as well, accumulating 286 yards of its own.

BAUER’S FINAL SCORE PREDICTION

“I’ve gone back and forth on this one and am having trouble settling on the numbers, but I have Penn State coming out with the win for a couple of reasons,” Bauer explained. “Yes, the White Out will be something to consider, but for me it just boils down to some-

thing that I think is prevalent throughout the Big Ten at this point: Most of Penn State’s opponents can’t (don’t want to?) produce points in bunches.

“Penn State is capable and wants to be aggressive offensively, and with playmakers that are hard to keep bottled up for four quarters, it only takes a handful of explosive plays to get into the 20s on the scoreboard.

“Twice now this season, Penn State has gotten itself into out-of-whack possession games against Pitt and Iowa, but has adjusted accordingly and come out with wins anyway.

“So just given some of the challenges Michigan has faced offensively this season, against what I consider to be a pretty strong Penn State defense that hasn’t allowed anyone to run the ball on it and makes life difficult for opposing quarterbacks, I think this game sets up well for Penn State to limit the Wolverines’ points.

“It’s just a question of what Penn State offense we’ll see. If Michigan’s defensive identity holds true and it’s a game of one-on-one matchups on the perimeter, like I said, it only necessarily takes a handful of big plays for Penn State to cash in.

“Even if Michigan takes those away, it’s just going to be very challenging to keep Penn State out of having enough scoring opportunities to get into the 20s. One thing to keep in mind, too, that I think is often overlooked but is critical nonetheless: Blake Gillikin is an outstanding punter for Penn State coming off an elite game at Iowa that truly dictated field position for most of the night.

“Even if Penn State’s explosive plays are taken away offensively, it does a good job playing complementary football to swing field position with the punting game and then using its defense to return the ball into the offense’s hands in pretty advantageous spot.

“For official submission, then, I’m going with **Penn State 30, Michigan 16**. Maybe that’s a touchdown too high for Penn State. And maybe Michigan is at 17 given its track record on field goals this season, though Penn State has been quite effective at clamping down in the red zone to force field goals rather than giving up touchdowns.”

Keys To The Game: Michigan Wolverines Football At Penn State

Chris Balas • TheWolverine

Penn State is 51-21 under head coach **James Franklin** since his arrival in Happy Valley, but the Nittany Lions haven’t been great against very good teams.

In fact, some would say they’ve been downright bad, and the record reflects it.

Franklin has gone 2-9 against top-10 teams since his arrival and picked up his first win over a ranked team on the road last week when Penn State pulled out a 17-12 win at Iowa. That made him 1-6 against ranked teams on the road.

At home, though, it's been a different story. PSU is similar to Michigan in that it looks like a completely different team at home versus away from it. The Nittany Lions get the Wolverines at home Saturday night, of course — the last time they did they put a 42-13 beating on them in 2017.

PSU is a nine-point favorite this time around, which would have been unfathomable to think about during the summer but now seems about right.

Franklin is only 1-3 against **Jim Harbaugh**, having been blown out three times, but his team showed resolve and toughness at Iowa, while U-M sputtered to the finish against a poor Illinois team. If you believe in momentum ... well, No. 9 Penn State has it, while Michigan still seems to be searching for a positive identity. The Wolverines' current personality is a team that is undisciplined, can't get out of its own way and fragile on the road.

Here's what Harbaugh and his team have to do Saturday to change the narrative and remain in the hunt for a Big Ten championship:

Play mistake-free football: This isn't hard-hitting analysis here. In fact, it's pretty obvious. But it's also the No. 1 factor when it comes to keeping this game competitive, and it goes beyond turnovers.

Mistakes have prevented this team from being consistent, especially offensively, for the entire season. There's been at least one turnover in every game, and it would have been worse — and Michigan might have lost — had two fumbles not been recovered by offensive players against Iowa. The Wolverines are 118th out of 130 teams in turnovers lost (13) and 126th in fumbles lost (nine). It's an epidemic, and losses will mount against a tough back half of the schedule if they continue.

But they're not the only mistakes hindering this team. The first drive of the second half against Illinois, for example — senior quarterback **Shea Patterson** drops the ball and jumps on it for a four-yard loss. Redshirt junior tight end **Nick Eubanks** drops a pass on second down, leading to a punt two downs later ... those are the things that can't happen in a game like this.

Every possession, every *play* counts. They'll need to bring the 'A' game to win in that primetime environment.

Limit yardage underneath coverage: Michigan defensive coordinator Don Brown has made adjustments to take away the crossing routes teams have burned his group over the last several games, sometimes leaving a safety or linebacker in wait, other times mixing in some zone.

Penn State wide receiver **K.J. Hamler** will be an issue for the Wolverines if they don't continue to mix it up. He's a potential nightmare when it comes to yards after catch, having amassed 455 yards receiving (231 after the catch) and proving to be deadly in space — he's 5-9 and shifty, so they'll try to get him the ball when he's on the move and let him work underneath the defense.

PSU quarterback **Sean Clifford**, meanwhile, is extremely capable with his feet, hav-

ing run for 252 yards (on 4.3 yards per carry). He's also been sacked three times in a trio of games this year, so there's opportunity there for the aggressive Michigan defense ... but only if the Wolverines' pass rushers maintain rush lanes and don't leave the middle of the field open for him. Let him out and he'll burn you.

U-M should be able to prevent deep explosive plays and stop the run against this team. These are the battles that will determine who wins the war on that side of the ball.

Hit on some explosive plays offensively: Penn State's defense has athletes all over the field, and sustaining long drives usually isn't in the cards ... and probably won't be for a Michigan offense that can't help but shoot itself in the foot on a play or two each drive.

They Nittany Lions will mix up their defenses as well as anyone in the conference, from Tampa Two look (dropping a middle linebacker deep in coverage) to zone blitzes to straight man.

It's when they're in cover zero (blitzing with no safety help) that Patterson will have an opportunity to take some shots with his receivers. Many made fun of PSU's "arm punt" offense in 2016 when the Nittany Lions won the Big Ten, but it worked. This is a game in which a big receiver like U-M junior **Nico Collins** can make an impact on 50-50 balls, but only if Patterson can recognize the defenses. They disguise them well.

The Breakdown — Michigan at Penn State: This Penn State team is not as talented offensively as the one that blew the Wolverines out two years ago in Happy Valley. There's no **Saquon Barkley** in the backfield or **Trace McSorley** under center.

Though Clifford has been solid, he's struggled in the passing game against the two decent teams the Nittany Lions have played this year, going 14-of-30 passing in a 17-10 win over Pitt and 12 for 24 during the win at Iowa. Their receivers are just solid outside of the explosive Hamler.

U-M has the talent to win this game, but does it have the team? The Wolverines have put together only one complete game this year, a 52-0 shellacking of Rutgers (against whom everyone seems to put a complete game together), and their road woes against good teams are well documented.

This is a very winnable game, but not if they play the way they've competed so far this season.

News & Views: Jim Harbaugh On PSU, More

Chris Balas • TheWolverine

Michigan football heads to Happy Valley Saturday night as a decided underdog and will need an outstanding effort to beat Penn State. Head coach **Jim Harbaugh** senses his team is ready.

We tackle his [Monday comments](#) in News & Views format:

NEWS: Michigan is now a nine-point underdog at Penn State after opening at plus-7. Penn State is coming off a 17-12 win at Iowa.

HARBAUGH: “We certainly have an opportunity this week. We want to prepare for it. There’s an excitement to it. There’s a bounce in the step of everybody on our team. I thought we accomplished what we wanted to this past week, which was to win the game and improve as a football team. Now onward. Have at it.”

VIEWS: Use whatever analogy you want, Harbaugh said ... playoff mentality, whatever. He said they are “locked in” with a “laser focus” on this game, as they should be, because let’s face it — this one’s the season in a lot of ways.

The seniors on this squad came back intent on competing for a championship, and the margin for error was eliminated when they got thrashed at Wisconsin. Lose another Big Ten game and there’s essentially no shot at a title only seven games into the season.

Penn State is solid, not spectacular. This isn’t the same team that thrashed U-M in Happy Valley two years ago with star quarterback **Trace McSorley** and stud running back **Saquon Barkley**. But these Nittany Lions play hard, and they don’t make a lot of mistakes. U-M needs to play a clean game to even have a shot, and that’s something the Wolverines haven’t done all year.

“This week we’re going to have to play our best, the best we’re capable of,” Harbaugh said. “Penn State is a heck of a good football team.”

Michigan can match the talent, but right now, PSU is a better *team*. And their front seven is going to be a tough matchup for the U-M offensive line.

“They’re fast, very athletic, very strong in all phases,” Harbaugh noted. “We’ll have to go in there and play our best football. My experience is the better team usually wins. That’s a challenge we’re very excited about.”

NEWS: Penn State quarterback **Sean Clifford** has thrown for 1,560 yards with 13 touchdowns against only two interceptions in six games.

HARBAUGH: “His play is really good. I’ve been really impressed with his focus, too, just getting a chance to watch him on the TV copy. He has the really intense focus all the good ones have. He’s highly competitive, and you can see it in his runs, just in his nature, how he plays the game.”

VIEWS: The praise isn’t coachspeak, either. Clifford only threw for 117 yards but he ran for 52 more at Iowa, protected the ball and took what was there despite being under duress and sacked three times. Most importantly, he didn’t put the ball on the ground or turn it over, understanding that a mistake would probably determine the winner last Saturday at Iowa ... the Hawkeyes made the big one, fumbling in their own territory.

That’s one area in which U-M senior quarterback **Shea Patterson** needs to be better. He simply has to protect the ball better, make good decisions and outplay Clifford (and

keep on the read option when the play is there) if Michigan is going to win this game.

The Michigan defense, meanwhile, needs to keep an eye on Clifford in man coverage, too, or he will kill them scrambling if they leave their rush lanes.

We don’t expect U-M to have much success running the ball. This game is going to come down to Patterson making some plays — it’s time to see the former five-star will his team to a win.

NEWS: Michigan got out to a 28-0 lead at Illinois before the Illini ripped off 25 straight to make a game of it early in the fourth quarter.

HARBAUGH: “I don’t know how many times in a game true momentum swings, but to come out playing hard and fast with great energy the way our football team did, how hard [they played] from the first snap to the very last, keep fighting ...

“There were definitely plays in that game that got the momentum back to our team. We got it back and then got it back again with another one [a forced fumble inside the 5-yard line], a big exclamation point, then another one. It was really good to see your team do that.”

VIEWS: Give them credit for responding after the Illini punched back.

However ...

We’re talking Illinois here, the second worst team in the Big Ten. The Wolverines never should have been in that position, and if they go through a similar stretch in any of the next six ball games, they’ll be in trouble. Every game remaining on the schedule is losable (even at Maryland) if they have a lull similar to the third quarter letdown in Champaign.

The problem is, we’ve seen something like it in just about every game this season barring Rutgers.

Between turnovers and lack of execution on offense, this team has fallen far short of its potential. It has a great opportunity to change the narrative with a huge win at Penn State in primetime on ABC.

We’d pick a decisive Penn State win if we were predicting today, though Michigan certainly has the talent to win over a solid but unspectacular Nittany Lions squad.

Wolverine Watch: It's Time To Get A Grip

John Borton • TheWolverine

The scene couldn't be much bigger for a Michigan team desperate to declare itself a Big Ten contender.

ESPN College GameDay, nestled into Happy Valley. A whiteout at Beaver Stadium, rocking with leftover hatred from the **Lloyd Carr** days, when Penn State once lost nine in a row to the Wolverines.

A pair of the biggest names in college football history, scrambling to reestablish themselves among the elite. Two proud programs trying to emerge as the No. 1 challenger to the Evil Empire that has dominated the Big Ten landscape far too long.

The Wolverines and Nittany Lions share plenty in common, including a tough, defense-dominated victory over Iowa. The Hawkeyes represent the only quality Big Ten opponent Penn State has faced. Michigan isn't looking back at its other one — for good reason.

The biggest difference between **James Franklin's** Nittany Lions and **Jim Harbaugh's** Wolverines, so far? That's easy, and not good news for the invaders from the west.

Penn State's bench apparently features a vat of Stickum for hand dipping prior to entering the game. Michigan's sports a vat of Crisco.

The Nittany Lions have turned the ball over precisely six times in going 6-0 the first half of the season. That's four lost fumbles, and a pair of **Sean Clifford** interceptions on 159 passing attempts.

Michigan senior quarterback Shea Patterson isn't far off, when it comes to caretaking through the air. He's tossed a trio of pickoffs in 161 throws this year. That's not the issue.

Where the Wolverines are dropping the ball is ... well, dropping the ball. They've fumbled it away nine times this season, tied for the second-worst safeguarding job in the nation. Only Colorado State— with a dozen fumbles lost and backs barred from hoisting newborns in the hospital — is worse.

Michigan has actually put it on the turf 17 times thus far, but scrambled back to cover eight of them. Still, multiply the potential and realized giveaways by two and you've got 34 fumbles and 18 fumbles lost for the regular season.

Those sorts of numbers haven't been seen in Michigan football since the **Rich Rodriguez** days, when the "Spot The Ball" mantra turned into "Drop The Ball" reality once the snap occurred.

Rodriguez's spread-offense squads lost 18, 13 and 14 fumbles in going 15-22 over the course of three forgettable seasons in Ann Arbor. Michigan hasn't seen a dozen lost fumbles in a season since, but will almost certainly get there this year.

That's no way to win in Happy Valley. In fact, it could be a recipe for a blowout.

"They've got to tighten it up," [assured Michigan Radio sideline reporter Doug Karsch](#). "You can't go to Penn State on national TV and expect to win a night game without a buttoned-up ship. They've just turned it over too many times."

Karsch insists the fumbles are a function of Michigan's young, inexperienced performers in the backfield. There's an element of truth to what he says. Freshmen and even redshirt freshmen are certainly not physically developed to the level of seniors, while they are unaccustomed to greater closing speed and harder hitting at the college level.

Michigan featured a senior back last season in **Karan Higdon**, and the Wolverines lost three fumbles all year — tied for best in the nation.

"He was a strong, strong kid, and he didn't fumble the ball very much," Karsch said. "**Mike Hart**, famously, went 300-some carries without fumbling the ball. Mike was just a small ball of muscle.

"These backs have a ways to go, physically, and when you see the kids, up close and personal, as freshmen, and then see them as seniors ... it just happens as they go through college."

But that's not all of it. Patterson has gone through college, and he's fumbled six times, losing four. Lack of protection led to a couple of those early, along with Patterson's penchant for trying to get rid of the ball at the last possible second — sometimes too late.

Penn State features a defense that can take advantage. Former Pittsburgh Steelers great **Jack Ham** — a radio analyst for Penn State broadcasts — says this group is the "fastest, most physical defense he's ever seen for the Nittany Lions," [according to Jed Donohue of the PA Sports Network during his appearance on TheWolverine.com Podcast this week](#).

That's a tough combo, any way you slice it.

On the other hand, there's U-M senior linebacker **Josh Uche**, exhibiting the kind of defiance you'd expect.

"If we execute, there's nobody in the country that can beat us," [Uche insisted](#). "That's a *fact*. We execute and do our jobs, do what the coaches ask of us, execute our game plays, there's no one in the country that's touching us."

If they don't, there are several that can, including Penn State.

"Get a grip" usually applies to football fans in general. Saturday night, it needs to be Michigan's mantra.

By The Numbers: Saturday Was The Eighth-Best Rushing Output Under Harbaugh

Austin Fox • TheWolverine

The Michigan Wolverines' football team finally got its ground game on track last Saturday at Illinois, compiling a season-high 295 yards while averaging 6.1 yards per carry.

The Maize and Blue had only been averaging 129.2 yards on the ground through the club's first five games, and had surpassed 141 yards in just one contest (233 in the season-opening win over Middle Tennessee State).

Redshirt freshman running back **Hassan Haskins** led the way against the Illini with 125 yards and a touchdown, while freshman running back **Zach Charbonnet** chipped in 116 yards and a score of his own.

Outstanding ground efforts have led to high levels of success during head coach **Jim Harbaugh's** tenure at Michigan (since 2015), with Saturday's performance actually checking in as the eighth-best rushing total under his tutelage, and the 16th time overall that his club had rushed for at least 250 yards in a game.

All 16 of those contests have also shared one key element: U-M is undefeated in each of them.

Every Time Michigan has Rushed for at Least 250 Yards in a Game Under Harbaugh

Not only has Michigan consistently beat its opponents when it has success running the ball, but it usually obliterates them.

Only one of the 16 games on the list above was decided by single digits (the 27-20 overtime victory at Indiana in 2017), while nine of them were determined by at least 30 points.

The Wolverines have also shown an ability to pick up yards on the ground in chunks in the victories listed above, averaging at least 6.1 yards per carry in all but four of them.

Another aspect that needs to be mentioned is that almost all of U-M's best rushing outputs under Harbaugh have occurred in Ann Arbor, with the 2016 affair at Rutgers, the 2017 showdown at Indiana and last Saturday's win at Illinois being the lone exceptions.

It's worth noting, though, that the Scarlet Knights' 2016 run defense finished 126th in the nation, the Hoosiers' 2017 crew concluded at 61st and the Illini's current unit stands at 107th after seven weeks.

Why the Maize and Blue haven't been able to consistently establish excellent rushing outputs on the road in recent years remains a mystery, though it doesn't seem likely they'll buck that trend on Saturday when considering how Penn State's defen-

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sive front has performed this season.

The Nittany Lions' run defense currently ranks third in the country in yards allowed per game (53.8) and first in yards per carry (1.5), and has held five of its six opponents to 70 rushing yards or fewer (including a season-best minus-19 against Purdue Oct. 5).

BY THE NUMBERS: MICHIGAN AT PENN STATE

3.5 Sacks per game for the Michigan defense this season (including 12 in its last two games), which is tied for 12th best in all of college football. Junior defensive end **Kwity Paye** and senior linebacker **Josh Uche** are both tied for the team lead, with 4.5 apiece.

4 Miles-per-hour wind gusts projected for Saturday night in Happy Valley, which is a far cry from the 20 miles-per-hour breeze U-M and Illinois played in last weekend in Champaign. Game-time temperatures at Beaver Stadium are expected to be in the 40s with only a 10 percent chance of precipitation.

13 Touchdown passes for PSU redshirt sophomore quarterback **Sean Clifford** this season, which are the third most in the Big Ten behind Ohio State sophomore **Justin Fields**' 18 and Minnesota redshirt sophomore **Tanner Morgan's** 14. U-M senior **Shea Patterson's** nine, meanwhile, are tied for seventh in the league.

34.3 Has been the average margin of victory for the winner in each of the last three meetings between the two teams, with Michigan beating Penn State 49-10 in 2016 and 42-7 last season, while PSU took down U-M 42-13 in 2017. The home team won each contest.

37.6 Rushing yards per contest the Wolverines' defense has allowed over its last three outings in wins over Rutgers, Iowa and Illinois. All of this comes after the unit surrendered 359 yards on the ground in the Sept. 21 loss at Wisconsin.

40th & 43rd Is where PSU's rookie running back tandem of **Devyn Ford** and **Noah Cain** ranked nationally out of high school according to Rivals.com, respectively, with both of them just missing five-star status. The duo has lived up to the hype so far, with Cain's 310 yards leading the team and Ford's 215 checking in fourth.

376 Total rushing yards for U-M running back **Zach Charbonnet**, which are the most in the Big Ten among freshmen.

2015 Was the last time U-M won in Happy Valley, grabbing a 28-16 victory there on the Nittany Lions' annual white-out contest (though it was a noon kick). A stifling Wolverine defense held PSU to just 207 yards of offense and sacked quarterback **Christian Hackenberg** four times.

2018 Was the last time U-M beat an Associated Press top-25 team on the road, when it won at then-No. 24 Michigan State on Oct. 20, 2017. The Wolverines have lost their last two road affairs to ranked foes since then (at No. 10 Ohio State last year and at No. 13 Wisconsin this season), and will be looking to beat an AP top-10 team in its home stadium for the first time since winning 47-21 at No. 2 Notre Dame in 2006.

Michigan Wolverines Football Goes Familiar To Improve Running Game

Chris Balas • TheWolverine

Michigan's running game hasn't exactly been tearing it up in the first half of the season, but the Wolverines took a big step forward at Illinois by rushing for 295 yards.

Just about everyone has put up big yardage on the ground against the Fighting Illini this year, but offensive line coach **Ed Warinner** was pleased with the play of his group up front in a 42-25 win.

The tight ends and receivers also did their part, he added [Wednesday when he met with the media.](#)

"We got the outside game going with the pin and pull, got some linemen on the edge pulling our guards and center out there, did a nice job with that," Warinner said. "It was just good to establish a run game."

"We kind of talked about being more physical since the Wisconsin game on both sides of the ball, every position, and we've emphasized that in practice. It's starting to come to fruition, being able to control the line of scrimmage, run the football, stop the run on defense."

The Iowa game, a 10-3 win, was a testament to the toughness of the defense. The offense will still need to be much better on the back half of the schedule to compete for a title, starting Saturday night at Penn State.

If some of the run plays against Illinois looked familiar, they should have. Redshirt freshman running back **Hassan Haskins** took advantage of a return to the recent past to bounce outside a few times, while true freshman **Zach Charbonnet** had some holes opened by trapping tight ends.

"That was our top outside zone play last year. That was our top run play," Warinner confirmed. "Inside zone and pin and pull were our two top runs last year. We hadn't done as much of that."

"The first couple teams we played had schemed it up to kind of slow that down, so just a version of outside zone where you block down and zone pull people instead of just straight zone blocking ... we hadn't got that going to that degree. Our tight ends did a nice job setting the edge so we could do that."

It wasn't perfect, but it was much better. The Wolverines ran at will in the first half, especially, and were successful again later in the game. Both Haskins and Charbonnet eclipsed the 100-yard mark, and Haskins continues to show signs of being a solid No. 2 to Charbonnet.

Though he still needs to work on his pass blocking, Haskins has looked much more comfortable over the last few weeks. He notched a big run just before halftime against

Iowa and had a number of solid gains against the Illini, including his 29-yard touch-down.

“He has a lot of talent,” Warinner said. “Talent is great, [but] once you gain confidence to go with that talent, then you see ‘wow’ plays. And he’s starting to get his confidence in that, ‘this is what’s happening in front of me’ ... understanding blocking schemes, where the cuts are. Then you get into rhythm.”

Running the ball as a running back is like a shooter in basketball, where once a player hits two or three triples then they are rolling.

“Hit some runs and you get some confidence, start playing faster, everything starts clicking,” Warinner said. “He’s starting to get in that groove where when you give him the ball, you can feel he’s looking to know what he’s doing, knows how he wants to do it and understands what’s happening in front of him.”

It’s all about confidence and experience, something many of the returning starters on offense are regaining after struggling much of the first half of the season.

The coaches are putting them in positions in which they’ve been successful before, Warinner noted, and feel they have a better sense of what will work and what won’t go forward.

“It becomes clearer what you can and can’t do, what you’re good at and what you’re not good at,” he said. “As that picture clears itself up, you stick with that, do it more, build on it. We’re all into doing that.”

• Redshirt freshman right tackle **Jalen Mayfield** is still learning, but he’s come a long way since the beginning of the season, Warinner said.

“He’s grown quite a bit, starting to play his best football,” the offensive line coach said. “He’s still a work in progress, but from first couple games to where he is now, he’s continued to [improve].”

“He works really hard at it. He’s out there 15 minutes before practice, stays after, comes in every day in the morning when he’s free and watches extra film. He’s really committed to it. We see the growth.”

Most first-year players take time to adjust to the speed of the game and get through the nerves. Mayfield’s about there, Warinner added.

“He was focused on how do I do this job ... he’s past all that,” he said. “When you’re young and a freshman ... it’s not just getting past that first hit. That goes through your mind for weeks and weeks. Now we’re in week seven, eight of the season, now every play he’s thinking about how do I win and what details to win and not, ‘oh man.’”

Michigan Midseason Superlatives: MVPs, Top Position Groups, More

Chris Balas • The Wolverine

Michigan football has reached the halfway point of the season right where many believed they’d be — 5-1 with a loss at Wisconsin. But the record doesn’t tell the entire story.

This Michigan team has yet to prove it can put a complete game together, minus Rutgers (and, keep in mind, pretty much everybody does that against the Scarlet Knights). We can’t say they’ve continued to show the improvement you’d like to see heading into the back half of the schedule — not after a 10-point game against Iowa and a second-half head-scratcher at Illinois.

Not only did the offense struggle, but the defense also played uncharacteristically poorly in the second half in allowing the Illini back in to the game.

That won’t fly against most of the other teams on the schedule. If they continue to play like they have the last six games, the Wolverines will be starting 8-4 in the face.

Here are bests, worsts, surprises, disappointments and more from the first half of the season:

OFFENSIVE MVP — SOPHOMORE WR RONNIE BELL

The second-year wideout was supposed to be one of “the other guys” to complement juniors **Nico Collins** and **Donovan Peoples-Jones** along with redshirt sophomore **Tarik Black**. Instead, Bell has become one of junior quarterback Shea Patterson’s favorite targets, leading the team with 20 catches for 361 yards. He’s moved the chains on 16 of those grabs, has been targeted 38 times this year — nine more than anybody else — and gained 210 of his yards after the catch, according to Pro Football Focus (PFF).

The former two-star recruit and basketball player isn’t perfect, having dropped a few balls (three according to PFF), but he never takes a play off, is the best blocker of the receivers (from what we’ve seen) and plays every down like it matters. This offense has a chance to be very good if more follow his lead in the second half of the season.

DEFENSIVE MVP — SENIOR DT CARLO KEMP

This is a tough one given how many Wolverines are playing well on defense. There are literally four or five guys who could get the nod here, and it’s usually someone different every game leading the team in sacks, tackles for loss or some other impressive statistic.

Kemp, though, is most *valuable* in that they’d pretty much be toast without him. He is the glue in the middle, not very big but disruptive and quick off the ball, and he’s always up and chasing the play when he’s not making a play.

There’s not a guy on defense who doesn’t play with a high motor, honestly. Defensive coordinator **Don Brown** gets the most out of his group in that department, and Kemp is

their leader. His impact goes far beyond the 22 tackles, two tackles for loss and one fumble recovery he's credited with on the stat sheet.

Runners-up: Ends **Aidan Hutchinson** and **Kwity Paye**, corners **Lavert Hill** and **Ambry Thomas**, and linebacker **Josh Uche**.

BEST POSITION GROUP – CORNERBACKS

Senior **Lavert Hill** gave up one big play against Iowa, but he also made a few incredible ones when tested, including an interception Brown called one of the best he'd seen.

Redshirt freshman cornerback **Vincent Gray** gave up a couple over his head at Illinois, though he's generally been one of the defense's pleasant surprises this year, and junior **Ambry Thomas** is a [PFF Midseason All-American](#). His coverage grade of 89.8 from PFF is elite and ranks third nationally among all cornerbacks.

Thomas' 85.8 overall PFF grade is the second highest on Michigan's defense, trailing only junior defensive end **Kwity Paye's** 87.1. He also leads Power Five cornerbacks who have been targeted at least 15 times, with a 17.2 passer rating allowed.

The strong play has allowed U-M's pass defense to rank ninth nationally in fewest passing yards allowed (160.5 yards per game).

Runner-up (and a close second): Defensive Ends — Paye, sophomore **Aidan Hutchinson** and graduate transfer **Mike Danna** have been very good in their roles.

TOP FRESHMAN – RB ZACH CHARBONNET

This is an obvious one, of course. Charbonnet has run for a team-high 376 yards and is averaging 4.8 yards per carry while playing at less than 100 percent with a bit of a gimpy knee (which has limited him to five carries or less in two games).

He also leads U-M with five touchdowns and ranks second with 402 all-purpose yards (right behind team leader Bell's 428).

He hasn't proven to be the breakaway threat yet — only one run of better than 18 yards (41 in the season opener against Middle Tennessee State) — but he's outstanding in pass protection and will need to have a great second half if the Wolverines are going to contend in the Big Ten.

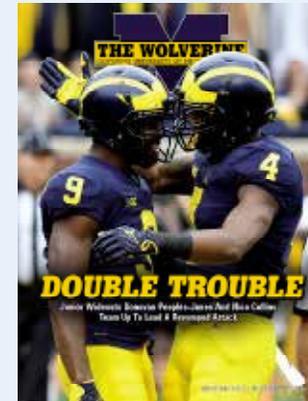
Runners-up: WR/KR Giles Jackson, TE Erick All — Jackson's been a solid kick return guy (22.2-yard average) and has even caught a touchdown pass in limited action, while All has made an impact as a blocker.

OFFENSIVE BREAKOUT PLAYER – REDSHIRT FRESHMAN RT JALEN MAYFIELD

The redshirt freshman right tackle could be more consistent, but he plays with an edge (like senior left guard **Ben Bredeson**), finishes blocks and isn't content to just do his job and let the chips fall. He plays to the whistle, likes to get under defensive ends' skin and moves extremely well.

His PFF grade of 74.1 ranks fourth on the team, and third among those that play reg-

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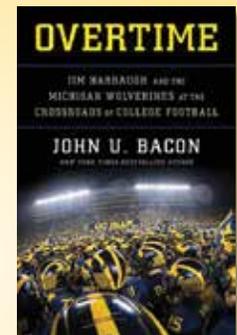
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ularly (behind only PFF Midseason All-American **Michael Onwenu** and Bredeson).

He and fellow redshirt frosh tackle **Ryan Hayes** are going to be a nice tandem down the road.

Runners-up: RB Hassan Haskins, Bell — Haskins ran for 125 yards against Illinois and has shown off some nice footwork at times, while Bell has taken his game to another level.

DEFENSIVE BREAKOUT PLAYER – REDSHIRT FRESHMAN LB CAMERON MCGRONE

The redshirt freshman inside linebacker came out of nowhere mid-camp to provide several ‘wow’ moments. Now he’s being used like star **Devin Bush** was a year ago, a speedy blitzing who can get off blocks and make plays.

His 24 tackles, 3.5 tackles for loss and 2.5 sacks don’t begin to describe his contribution. He notched 11 tackles and a forced fumble against the Illini.

“He’s playing steadily,” head coach **Jim Harbaugh** said. “The play he made to turn momentum with a big exclamation point back to our football team ... to come right back and make the play he did, defeated the blocker, got to the quarterback, got him, grabbed him and then punching ball out, that’s a big-time play.

“We’re seeing his instincts on darn near every down. Once is a happening, twice is a trend, three times is a habit. This is a darn good football player.”

Runners-up: Hutchinson, safety Brad Hawkins, Gray, linebacker Jordan Glasgow. All of these guys are playing at a high level and bring it every game.

LEAST EXPENDABLE OFFENSIVE PLAYER – CHARBONNET

Yes, Haskins had a nice game against Illinois, and senior **Tru Wilson** is solid, but Charbonnet is the one back on this team capable of moving the chains against good defenses ... and even he is only averaging 3.2 yards per attempt against Associated Press top-25 competition.

Charbonnet is the best pass blocker of the bunch, too, though Wilson is good in that respect.

Runner-up: Senior left guard Ben Bredeson — He’s the guy on the offensive line who brings the consistent edge on every down.

LEAST EXPENDABLE DEFENSIVE PLAYER – REDSHIRT JUNIOR DT MICHAEL DWUMFOUR

The redshirt junior defensive tackle is disruptive, and when he’s not in there (see: Army, Wisconsin), this team struggles up front.

Dwumfour was a difference-maker against Iowa and can muster some interior pass rush that’s been lacking when he’s on the sidelines. Though he officially has just one tackle in four games, PFF has credited him with six quarterback hurries so far.

There’s a huge drop-off behind him, so the Wolverines need him healthy for the back half of the schedule.

Runners-up: Thomas, Lavert Hill and senior safety Josh Metellus — There’s not enough depth at cornerback right now, and the same could be said for safety. Freshman **Daxton Hill** is coming along, but he played only eight snaps at Illinois. The three aforementioned defensive backs are near-irreplaceable, though U-M was able to win without Lavert Hill at Illinois.

POSITION GROUP WITH THE MOST ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT – OFFENSIVE LINE

We’re going to stop short of calling this group “most disappointing,” but we had higher expectations of this bunch. They’ve been together for several years now, but the lack of consistent push and nastiness continues to plague these guys.

The pass protection has been better the last few games, but they should be picking up blitzers in their sleep at this point. As a group, PFF lists them tied for 57th nationally in pass blocking efficiency — they have allowed 36 quarterback pressures so far (four sacks, five hits and 27 hurries in 209 pass-blocking snaps).

Runners-up: Quarterback, tight ends, receivers — There have been too many dropped balls (12 per PFF) and there’s been too much inconsistency both blocking and catching. The passing game should be better than it is, and it’s a combination of inconsistency from senior **Shea Patterson**, sketchy at times line play and inconsistent effort at wideout.

Updates On Every Former Michigan Wolverine In The NFL: Week Six

Ryan Tice • TheWolverine @RyanTice

There are only 29 rookies who have scored a touchdown through the first six weeks of the NFL season. Two of them are former Michigan football defenders, and both happened in their latest game.

Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker **Devin Bush Jr.** picked up a fumble and returned it nine yards for the score Sunday in the Steelers’ 24-17 win over the Chargers on Sunday Night Football.

He actually wound up with the ball in his hands in the end zone twice — but after he corralled a pick for the second straight week he was ruled down when he slipped after running just six yards. Still, he ran into the end zone and celebrated with his teammates.

Bush now has a league-best four fumble recoveries, while his team-high seven tackles in the game also gave him 52 stops on the year, which is ranked 10th in the league.

However, Bush wasn’t the first U-M rookie to find pay dirt this season. New England Patriots defensive end **Chase Winovich** came up with a blocked punt in his team’s 35-14 win over the Giants Thursday night.

It marked Winovich’s first touchdown since high school, and he celebrated by

throwing the football into the stands — which is expected to draw a \$7,017 fine per NFL rules.

“I’ve been planning on throwing it into the stands for a while, so it’s kind of already been accounted for — but I didn’t know the fine was quite so steep,” he joked after the game. “No regrets.”

A full breakdown of how former Wolverines did in the NFL’s week six is below:

OG Ben Braden, Green Bay Packers

Spent the first week with the New York Jets on their practice squad, but was released and quickly picked up by the Packers for their practice squad, where he still resides.

QB Tom Brady, New England Patriots

Kept the 6-0 Patriots unbeaten — one of just two teams in the league without a loss — with a 35-14 win against the Giants ... Completed 31 of 41 passes (75.6 percent) for 334 yards with an interception and also rushed for two scores ... On the season, he has completed 149 of 228 passes (65.4 percent) for 1,743 yards with 10 touchdowns and three interceptions ... Holds a passer rating of 97.5 and has run for three scores ... Ranks second in the league in passing yards and 14th in quarterback rating among qualified passers.

TE Ian Bunting, Indianapolis Colts

After being released by the Jets, he was signed to the 3-2 Colts’ practice squad.

LB Devin Bush Jr., Pittsburgh Steelers

Shined on Sunday night with a team-high seven tackles (four solo), plus an interception he officially returned for six yards and a fumble he picked up and ran in nine yards for the touchdown in the 2-4 Steelers’ 24-17 win over the Chargers ... That makes two straight games with a pick ... Perhaps the leading candidate for Rookie of the Year honors, he has started in five games and played in all six with 52 tackles (32 solo), one sack, three passes broken up, two interceptions and four fumble recoveries, one of which he returned for a score ... Ranks 10th in the league in total tackles, while nobody has pounced on more fumbles ... No other rookie is within eight stops of him.

TE Jake Butt, Denver Broncos

On injured reserve with the 2-4 Broncos after what he called on Twitter a “minor scope” to his knee early in the year.

DE Taco Charlton, Miami Dolphins

Started and notched four tackles in the 0-5 Dolphins’ 17-16 loss to Washington ... Has started twice and appeared in three games with Miami, and has totaled 12 tackles (six solo) with 2.0 sacks.

WR Jehu Chesson, Washington Redskins

Is on the reserve/injured list for 1-5 Washington.

DE Frank Clark, Kansas City Chiefs

Started and tallied a tackle, a quarterback hit and a forced fumble, which he recovered, in the 4-2 Chiefs’ 31-24 loss to the Texans ... Has started all six games and

notched 12 tackles (seven solo) with one sack, an interception, a forced fumble and a fumble recovery.

C/G Mason Cole, Arizona Cardinals

Played one offensive snap and six on special teams in the 2-3-1 Cardinals’ 34-33 win over the Falcons ... Has appeared as a reserve in all six contests.

WR Devin Funchess, Indianapolis Colts

Started for the 3-2 Colts and broke his collarbone in week one, after hauling in three passes for 32 yards, and is now on injured reserve.

LB Rashan Gary, Green Bay Packers

Played nine defensive snaps (15 percent) and also on special teams in Green Bay’s 23-22 win over the Lions on Monday night, but did not record any statistics ... Has seen action in every game off the bench for the 5-1 Packers and logged eight tackles with one sack and a fumble recovery.

LB Ben Gedeon, Minnesota Vikings

Was not active in the 4-2 Vikings’ 38-20 win over the Eagles ... Reportedly was still in concussion protocol from an injury suffered last week ... Has made eight stops while starting twice and appearing in four games.

TE Zach Gentry, Pittsburgh Steelers

Played one snap in the 2-4 Steelers’ 24-17 win over the Chargers ... Has appeared in three games, but has not recorded any statistics outside of a fumble recovery.

OL Graham Glasgow, Detroit Lions

Started at his customary right guard spot and played 41 snaps (69 percent) and also on special teams in the 2-2-1 Lions’ 23-22 loss to the Packers ... Coming into the weekend, [he was ranked by Pro Football Focus as the No. 3 guard in the league](#) ... “Glasgow has been just ok in pass protection this season, allowing a hit and eight hurries from 133 pass-blocking snaps, but he has really impressed as a run blocker since kicking back to guard,” they wrote. “His 87.7 PFF run-blocking grade trails only [No. 1 guard Quenton] Nelson at the position, putting him on course for a career year.” ... Has opened all five games so far for his team.

DT Ryan Glasgow, Cincinnati Bengals

Was not active for the third time in the last four weeks during the 0-6 Bengals’ 23-17 loss to the Ravens ... Has appeared in three games with two starts and totaled six tackles.

DE Brandon Graham, Philadelphia Eagles

After setting a career high with three sacks last week, he followed up with another sack plus a tackle for loss among four total stops in a 30-28 loss to the Vikings ... Has started all six games for 3-3 Philadelphia, and has 20 tackles with four sacks and a fumble recovery ... Is tied for 17th in the league for quarterback takedowns.

QB Chad Henne, Kansas City Chiefs

On injured reserve for the 4-2 Chiefs after breaking his ankle in the preseason.

RB Karan Higdon, Houston Texans

Is on the 4-2 Texans' practice squad.

S Lano Hill, Seattle Seahawks

Notched a tackle on defense and another on special teams in the 5-1 Seahawks' 32-28 win over the Browns ... Has appeared in every game with two starts and totaled eight tackles.

DT Maurice Hurst, Oakland Raiders

The 3-2 Raiders had a bye ... Has started twice and played in all five games while making 10 stops with two sacks and one pass broken up.

FB Joe Kerridge, Cleveland Browns

On injured reserve with the 2-4 Browns.

OT Taylor Lewan, Tennessee Titans

Started and played every snap for the second straight week in the 2-4 Titans' 16-0 loss to the Broncos ... Has two starts in two appearances this year.

CB Jourdan Lewis, Dallas Cowboys

Notched four tackles and his first interception of the year, which he returned 20 yards, in the 3-3 Cowboys' 24-22 loss to the Jets ... Has nine stops, two passes broken up and one interception in six games off the bench this year.

CB David Long, Los Angeles Rams

Was inactive for the 3-3 Rams' 20-7 loss to the 49ers ... Has been active for only one game this year, but did not play.

OL Erik Magnuson, Buffalo Bills

Currently resides on the 4-1 Bills' practice squad.

DT Bryan Mone, Seattle Seahawks

Is currently on the 5-1 Seahawks' practice squad, but played in the first three games for the team and notched a trio of tackles.

OL Patrick Omameh, New Orleans Saints

Played one snap at guard and three on special teams in the 5-1 Saints' 13-6 win over the Jaguars ... Has appeared off the bench in four contests this year.

S Jabrill Peppers, New York Giants

Started at strong safety and set a career high with 10 tackles ... Eight were solo stops, while one came behind the line of scrimmage ... Played every defensive snap ... On the year, he has posted 40 tackles (29 solo) and three passes broken up with one interception (a pick-six) and a forced fumble ... Is tied for 36th in the league in total stops and 45th in passes defended (four).

QB Jake Rudock, Miami Dolphins

Is on the 0-5 Dolphins' practice squad.

LB Jake Ryan, Jacksonville Jaguars

On the reserve/non-football injury list for the 2-4 Jaguars after suffering an off-season setback during his rehab from a torn ACL.

OL Michael Schofield, Los Angeles Chargers

Started at right guard and played every offensive snap in the 2-4 Chargers' 24-17 loss to the Steelers ... Has not missed a snap yet this year while starting all six contests.

CB Brandon Watson, Jacksonville Jaguars

The undrafted rookie is on the 2-4 Jaguars' practice squad.

S Jarrod Wilson, Jacksonville Jaguars

Started at free safety and played every snap in the Jaguars' 13-6 loss to the Saints ... Did not record any statistics ... Has started each game this year and racked up 29 tackles (19 solo) with one pass broken up.

DE Chase Winovich, New England Patriots

Was in for 14 defensive snaps (28 percent), but made his biggest impact on special teams when he picked up a blocked punt and returned it six yards for a touchdown ... Broke his stream of four straight games with at least an assisted sack ... In six games, he has logged seven tackles with four sacks, plus the touchdown after a blocked punt ... Is tied for 17th in the league for sacks and is tied for second among rookies, trailing by 0.5.

DE Chris Wormley, Baltimore Ravens

Started and notched a pair of tackles in 4-2 Baltimore's 23-17 win over the Bengals ... Was in for 21 defensive snaps (34 percent) and eight on special teams (32 percent) ... Has seen action in every contest so far and made three starts with four tackles.