

THE WOLVERINE

COVERING UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN SPORTS

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NOV. 30, 2019 ♦ MICHIGAN VS. OHIO STATE

Game Info

Site: at Michigan Stadium (107,601)

Kickoff: 12:00 p.m.

Television: FOX

Radio: Michigan/IMG Radio Network (950 AM in the Detroit Area; SiriusXM channel 195) with Dan Dierdorf, Jim Brandstatter and sideline reporter Doug Karsch, a regular contributor to TheWolverine.com.

Series Facts: The Wolverines hold a 58-51-6 advantage in the all-time series against the Buckeyes, but have not won in 14 of the last 15 matchups ... This will mark the 23rd time the rivals meet with both ranked among the nation's top 10 — OSU holds an 11-9-2 edge in such games, including wins in each of the last three ... The two have played 47 previous times at The Big House, with U-M currently boasting a slight 23-21-3 lead ... Michigan enters the game ranked No. 10 by the Associated Press and No. 11 by the coaches, with Ohio State checking in at No. 2 in both.

Previewing Ohio State With A Buckeye Insider

Austin Fox • TheWolverine

Kyle Rowland of The Toledo Blade was kind enough to swing by TheWolverine.com this week and break down Ohio State's football team prior to its game with the Michigan Wolverines this Saturday.

Rowland discussed what has all led to OSU's undefeated campaign so far in 2019, while also providing a prediction on how he sees Saturday's showdown in Ann Arbor playing out.

OHIO STATE'S PROJECTED STARTERS ON OFFENSE

Sophomore QB Justin Fields — His 33 touchdown passes are the most in the Big Ten and are tied for the third most in college football, while his 69.4 completion percentage is the third-best mark in the league. Fields has also chipped in 445 yards and 10 touchdowns on the ground, with the former statistic standing as the second most in the conference among quarterbacks (Nebraska sophomore Adrian Martinez's 582 are the most).

Junior RB J.K. Dobbins — His 1,446 rushing yards are the fourth most in the nation, while his 15 rushing scores check in second in the Big Ten. Dobbins is also averaging 6.6 yards per carry, and has rushed for at least 141 yards in six different games.

Fifth-year senior WR K.J. Hill — His 42 receptions lead the team, but his 469 yards are the third most on the roster. Hill's seven touchdown grabs are tied for the sixth most in the league, though he has exceeded 62 yards in an outing just once this year (78 yards in the win over Miami of Ohio).

Senior WR Binjimen Victor — He has hauled in 29 catches for 480 yards and six TDs, while averaging 16.6 yards per catch. At 6-4, 199 pounds, Victor is the tallest Buckeye wideout expected to see action on Saturday.

Sophomore WR Chris Olave — Michigan fans likely remember him best from last year's matchup when he logged two first-half touchdowns against the Wolverines. Olave's 637 yards and 10 TD receptions this season both lead the club, with the latter statistic tying for the most in the Big Ten.

Redshirt junior TE Luke Farrell — He has served primarily as a blocker this year, only compiling four grabs for 73 yards. Two of Farrell's four catches, however, have gone for touchdowns.

Junior LT Thayer Munford — He has been Ohio State's second-best offensive lineman, racking up a 78.7 overall grade (64 is considered average) from Pro Football Focus (PFF). According to the outlet, Munford has excelled as a run blocker and has compiled an 80.8 mark in that department.

Fifth-year senior LG Jonah Jackson — He transferred in from Rutgers after starting 11 outings with the Scarlet Knights in 2018 and earning honorable mention All-Big Ten recognition from both the coaches and media. Jackson has made a smooth transition to his new school, starting all 11 affairs and earning a 75.5 tally from PFF.

Redshirt sophomore C Josh Myers — He is in his first year as a starter after taking over for the departed Michael Jordan, who went pro early and became a fourth-round NFL draft pick of the Cincinnati Bengals. PFF has rated Myers the lowest of Ohio State's five starting offensive linemen, slotting him with a 68.8 grade.

Redshirt sophomore RG Wyatt Davis — His 81.0 mark from PFF is the best of anyone in OSU's front five, and is the fifth-best tally on the Buckeyes' entire offense. Davis has seen 686 snaps in 2019, which are tied with Myers and Jackson for the most on Ohio State's offense.

Fifth-year senior RT Branden Bowen — At 6-7, 315 pounds, he is both the second-tallest and second-heaviest player on the roster. Bowen ranks third out of OSU's five starting offensive linemen with a 71.0 grade from PFF.

OHIO STATE'S PROJECTED STARTERS ON DEFENSE

Junior DE Chase Young — His 16.5 sacks are the most in college football, while his 19.5 tackles for loss are tied for third. Young's six forced fumbles are also the second most in the nation, and his 97.1 mark from PFF is the highest on the club's defense.

Fifth-year senior DT Davon Hamilton — His four quarterback takedowns are tied for the third most on Ohio State's roster, and he has also chipped in seven tackles

for loss. Hamilton's 84.1 tally as a run defender is the second best of OSU's 11 projected defensive starters.

• **Fifth-year senior DT Jashon Cornell** — PFF has him tabbed as the Buckeyes' second-best defensive player behind Young, awarding him with a 90.3 grade. Cornell has racked up 5.5 TFLs and three sacks among 26 tackles.

• **Freshman DE Zach Harrison** — Though he is projected to start on Saturday, Ohio State's Nov. 9 win over Maryland is the only contest Harrison has begun this year. The freshman has accumulated four tackles for loss and 2.5 sacks in 2019, but has yet to play more than 29 snaps in an outing.

• **Senior LB Malik Harrison** — He leads the team with 61 tackles, and is second with 14.5 TFLs. Harrison's 88.7 PFF mark is the third best among the Buckeyes' projected starters, trailing Young's 97.1 and Cornell's 90.3.

• **Redshirt junior LB Tuf Borland** — Though he has compiled an impressive 77.2 tally from PFF, it only ranks 19th on OSU's defense. Borland's 42 stops are the fourth most on the team, and he has also added three TFLs and one sack.

• **Junior LB Pete Werner** — His 49 stops are second on the roster to Malik Harrison's 61. PFF has Werner pegged with an above-average 75.0 overall grade, but that only clocks in 25th on the Buckeye defense.

• **Junior CB Jeffrey Okudah** — His three interceptions lead the team and his four pass breakups are tied for second most. PFF has him tabbed as OSU's second-best pass defender, awarding him with an 85.2 mark in that department.

• **Fifth-year senior CB Damon Arnette** — He is one of the most experienced players on Ohio State's squad, having started all 13 clashes last year and 12 of the 14 in 2017. Arnette has registered four pass breakups and one interception in 2019, but that one pick resulted in a 96-yard return he took to the house in the Sept. 14 win at Indiana.

• **Redshirt sophomore CB Shaun Wade** — His eight pass breakups not only lead Ohio State, but are four more than any other player on the crew. Wade's 469 snaps on the year are the second most in OSU's three-cornerback look, with Okudah leading the way with 512 and Arnette sliding in third with 434.

• **Senior S Jordan Fuller** — He made arguably the biggest play of the game against Michigan in 2017, sealing the victory by picking off John O'Korn with only 2:42 remaining while U-M was attempting to mount a game-winning drive. Fuller's 48 tackles are the third most on the team this season, and PFF has tagged him as OSU's best pass defender with an 88.1 tally.

OHIO STATE'S PROJECTED STARTERS ON SPECIAL TEAMS

• **Junior K Blake Haubeil** — He has connected on eight of his 10 field goals, including a long of 55 yards. Haubeil is 4 of 4 from beyond 40 yards, with his two misses coming from 32 and 37 yards out.

• **Redshirt junior P Drue Chrisman** — He has averaged 44 yards on 34 punts, with 11 of the 34 traveling 50 or more yards. Chrisman has also dropped 15 punts inside the opponent's 20-yard line, and has yet to have one blocked in 2019.

OHIO STATE'S BIGGEST STRENGTH ON OFFENSE

"Ohio State's biggest strength on offense is just the sheer amount of talent it has," Rowland noted. "Justin Fields, J.K. Dobbins and the wide receivers are as skilled as anyone in the Big Ten at their position."

"There are so many trapdoors for opponents that it's difficult to keep them below 28 points, as we saw last week. The Buckeyes had three turnovers, amounting to a 17-point swing against a top-10 team, and still won by double digits. Granted, it was at home, but it was another window into how dominant they've been this season."

Ohio State ranks either at or near the top of the country in most of the game's major offensive categories, checking in sixth in total offense (530.4 yards per outing), first in scoring (49.4) and fourth in rushing (282).

OSU has recorded at least 34 points in 10 of its 11 affairs, and has registered at least 417 yards in all 11 of its contests.

OHIO STATE'S BIGGEST WEAKNESS ON OFFENSE

"I actually think Fields could be a weakness, simply because he hasn't been tested for four whole quarters where completing passes is paramount," the insider said. "He did find Chris Olave for a critical touchdown last week, but it's plausible that he struggles against Michigan and it significantly hampers Ohio State's offense."

"You could throw the offensive line in that category as well, which might sound strange when you consider how well Ohio State's run the ball. Sacks have been an issue, though, so I think it's fair to say the line is sometimes a problem."

The Buckeyes' front five has yielded 25 sacks on the year, which is deadlocked for 83rd in college football and tied for ninth in the Big Ten.

OSU's offensive line has also surrendered 61 tackles for loss in 2019, tying for 55th nationally.

As for Fields and his passing statistics, he has thrown for more than 234 yards just once this season, and has yet to attempt more than 25 passes in a game.

OHIO STATE'S BIGGEST STRENGTH ON DEFENSE

"The defensive line and secondary have been dominant," Rowland explained. "Obviously everyone knows about Chase Young, but DaVon Hamilton, Zach Harrison and [sophomore defensive end] Tyreke Smith are also wrecking balls [along the defensive line]."

"[Cornerback] Jeffrey Okudah is projected to be a top-10 draft pick, and his teammates in the secondary — Damon Arnette, Shaun Wade and Jordan Fuller — don't lag far behind. The game plan last week on [Penn State redshirt sophomore receiver] K.J. Hamler

— though he probably wasn't 100 percent — completely took him out of the game."

Ohio State's defensive statistics are perhaps even more impressive than its offensive numbers, with its total defense (217.4 yards allowed per game), scoring defense (10.5) and pass defense (126.2) all checking in No. 1 in the nation.

Its numbers against the run aren't far behind, allowing 91.1 yards on the ground per clash to rank fifth in college football.

The Buckeyes have also been of the nation's best clubs at forcing turnovers, having racked up 23 on the year to tie for seventh nationally. OSU has tallied at least one takeaway in every affair, and has compiled at least three on four different occasions.

OHIO STATE'S BIGGEST WEAKNESS ON DEFENSE

"The linebackers have been awful for a few years, but that unit is improved," the writer revealed. "Malik Harrison is an All-Big Ten caliber player, Pete Werner is solid and Tuf Borland remains the weakest link."

Though the aforementioned trio are the primary linebackers Ohio State will play on Saturday, expect junior Baron Browning (247 snaps in 2019) to see plenty of action as well.

Any struggles the linebackers have endured certainly don't show up in the statistics, with the unit helping limit opponents to just 2.5 yards per carry (tied for third best in the country).

Though few and far between, some opponents have found success on the ground against OSU, with Nebraska best exemplifying that when it rushed for 184 yards and averaged 4.7 yards per carry on Sept. 28. Northwestern (157), Rutgers (110) and Cincinnati (107) all eclipsed 100 rushing yards against the Buckeyes as well.

ROWLAND'S FINAL SCORE PREDICTION

"In September, I never would have imagined giving Michigan much of a chance in this game," Rowland began. "But life comes at you fast in college football. This is no longer the same team that nearly lost to Army and was destroyed by Wisconsin."

"[Michigan senior quarterback Shea] Patterson has put Michigan on his back the past month and delivered the offense many thought would light up the scoreboard before the season began.

"It will still be a tall order beating Ohio State, which leads the nation in scoring offense and scoring defense. I've picked Michigan every year of the Jim Harbaugh era, but that's going to end this season. There are just too many things that need to happen for Michigan to win."

"That said, I will not be surprised at all if the Wolverines are victorious. There are some parallels to 1969 that a lot of people will be talking about if Michigan wins. It just has the feel of a potential upset and Michigan can play loose with nothing to lose."

Prediction: Ohio State 31, Michigan 21

Keys To The Game: Michigan Wolverines Football vs. Ohio State

Chris Balas • TheWolverine

On the field, the Buckeyes are reaching new heights; outside the lines it's been more of the same question marks that have plagued the program since the Jim Tressel era.

Coincidentally, that's when the OSU program took off and reached elite football success, competing for national titles and dominating the Big Ten.

They're the conference's SEC team of the north, and their success doesn't seem destined to end anytime soon. They're recruiting at ridiculous levels, have incredible team speed on both sides of the ball and operate ... well, like a football factory.

They've been tabbed one of the most unethical programs in college football history (and that was before the Urban Meyer – Zach Smith disaster), made headlines for as many wrong reasons off the field as right ones on it and seem to operate under the mantra "just win, baby" as well as any program in the country.

It's worked. They've now beaten Michigan (or, in Buckeye Jashon Cornell's words, "It's the 'Team Up North ... coaches stressed how much we don't say that name around here. That's how popular the rivalry is'") 14 out of the last 15 times, have risen to No. 1 in the country, and have the nation's best offense and defense, statistically.

The one thing they haven't done this season is prove themselves on the road against a good football team. If fact, the Wolverines would likely also be undefeated with the Buckeyes' schedule — playing Wisconsin and Penn State at home in October, rather than on the road earlier in the year — and OSU's road games at Indiana, Nebraska, Northwestern and Rutgers might be the league's easiest four-game stretch this year.

Regardless, there's no denying this is a great football team. Here's what Michigan has to do to beat the Buckeyes at home and finish the regular season 10-2:

Limit explosive plays on offense and make the Buckeyes kick some field goals: Michigan's defense has been outstanding since getting gashed at Wisconsin, the first half of the Penn State game notwithstanding, and coordinator Don Brown's crew has now risen to fourth nationally, allowing only 267 yards per game. They slowed a good Indiana offense after the Hoosiers scored 14 quick points and have been dominant at times, especially against the run.

This, however, is a completely different challenge. OSU's ability to pick up chunks of yardage isn't limited to the passing game. The Buckeyes are fourth nationally in runs from scrimmage over 10 yards and in the top 10 in 20-, 30-, 40- and 50-yard runs, as well. Running back J.K. Dobbins is a home-run threat every time he touches the ball in an offense designed to free him in space.

Ohio State is only No. 30 in passing plays over 20 yards (44), tied with Michigan, but make no mistake — these receivers can get behind the defense in a hurry.

Michigan State played OSU about as well as anyone this year for a half, but it was still 27-10 after the first 30 minutes (of an eventual 34-10 Buckeyes win) because of the explosive plays.

A 60-yard touchdown to Binjimen Victor, another 21-yard Justin Fields touchdown pass and a 67-yard Dobbins run just before the break opened it up. That can't happen to the Wolverines if they expect to hang around in this one.

Get outstanding quarterback play from Shea Patterson: The breaks have gone against Michigan quarterbacks over the last 15 years of the rivalry, from Chad Henne's noodle arm in 2007 to Denard Robinson's elbow in 2012 to Wilton Speight's injuries in both 2016 and 2017.

Devin Gardner led Michigan to a near-upset in 2014, but even then, a broken foot limited him on a two-point conversion attempt that would have won the game for the Wolverines.

OSU quarterbacks, meanwhile, have often saved their best for this one in the same period. It's time someone put an end to it, and the senior Patterson has it in him. He's thrown for more than 350 yards in his last two games and has nine touchdown passes during that span, playing the best football of his career.

U-M is among the worst teams in the country when it comes to explosive running plays and one of only 15 teams that doesn't have a run of 50-plus yards this season.

Teams don't run the ball on the Buckeyes, so odds are that's not changing. It's going to be up to Patterson and his receivers to move the ball against a defense that's just as good against the pass.

Have some success in the running game: It doesn't have to be a lot — just enough to keep guys like elite defensive end Chase Young honest and not bearing down on Patterson in pass rush on every play.

Last year's play up front in The Game was one of the bigger disappointments in a 62-39 loss. These guys are better than that and, when motivated, can be really good.

We expect a few wrinkles, too, reminiscent of former OSU head coach John Cooper at Michigan in 1999 when his team had a lot of success between the tackles with different schemes than he showed all year.

Harbaugh is well aware of his 0-4 record against the Buckeyes and has schemed very well in two of the four contests with OSU. We expect him to add a few things for this one, and for U-M to have more success on the ground than some might expect.

The Breakdown: Michigan Wolverines Football vs. Ohio State

This Ohio State unit appears to be one of the most complete teams we've seen in the history of the rivalry, and that's not hyperbole. The offense is perfectly suited for its talents, and unlike last year, this year's defense is outstanding too.

At the same time, this team has really only been tested by one good team, and that was at home against a Wisconsin squad coming off a horrible loss at Illinois. That game was 10-0 at half in large part because the Badgers couldn't run the ball ... something they do much better than Michigan.

All that being said — it's going to take an impeccable effort on both sides of the ball and/or some Ohio State mistakes if the Wolverines are going to win this one. They're due some breaks in this rivalry, but even that might not be enough.

News & Views: Harbaugh On Fields, OSU, Don Brown & More

Chris Balas • TheWolverine

Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh talked Ohio State Monday during his weekly press conference. We break down some of his thoughts in News & Views format:

NEWS: Michigan junior receiver Nico Collins notched career highs with eight catches for 165 yards in a win at Indiana.

HARBAUGH: "He's catching the contested balls as well as you can, drawn a lot of [pass interference] penalties. Sometimes they've got to grab him because he's getting behind them.

"... His blocking has been improving, and he's still got a ways to get better too ... some of the short area quickness. You saw him gain separation on the slant route this past week, the crossing routes. Gaining that separation ... that's been a big improvement in Nico's game. I think he's got more room to grow as well."

VIEWS: This is the guy we expected to see all year, but one thing about that — the balls he's caught for touchdowns the last two games were there earlier this year too. Senior quarterback Shea Patterson airmailed a few of them and didn't give his big receiver a chance to make a play.

It's no coincidence that Collins has improved as Patterson has. Senior cornerback Lavert Hill told us several weeks ago Collins was the one guy who was nearly impossible to separate from the ball with his size and his hands, and now he's really improving his route running.

Before the Indiana game, several said they expected Collins to return for his senior year. Now, they're not so sure. He could use another year of seasoning and he'd be a Biletnikoff Award Candidate if he does, but if he finishes with a couple of huge games

NEWS: Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields has thrown for 2,352 yards with 33 touchdowns and only one interception so far this season.

HARBAUGH: “Justin Fields has had a tremendous year. He’s playing winning football at all times. He’s really athletic, runs the ball extremely well and when he gets a lane, gets a throw, he’ll make the throw. Also, when there’s a lane, he’ll escape and do damage by himself running the football.”

VIEWS: It’s the latter that makes him insanely tough to defend. Twice Ohio State spread the offense out on third-and-long against Penn State, and it appeared as though the Nittany Lions were aware the draw might come. Twice Fields picked up nice gains by eluding a defender. Redshirt freshman linebacker Cam McGrone will likely be asked to spy him at times, and he’s going to have to be at his tackling best Saturday.

Fields is outstanding, no question, but his weapons make him look even better than he is. There’s speed and elite talent all over the field — it seems that half of his throws go to receivers with nobody around them. The scheme is just as good as the personnel, which is why the Buckeyes have the best offense in the country.

NEWS: Michigan defensive coordinator Don Brown said a few weeks back he felt his defense would be ready for Ohio State after giving up 62 points last season. He’s added to his defensive arsenal this year and limited most teams to numbers way below their averages.

HARBAUGH: “I’m not talking schematics going into any game, but we’ve been in a multitude of different fronts, different blitz packages, coverages … always a pretty high volume. Don does a great job of calling the defense, a great job of making adjustments during the week, in-game, all of it, as well as I’ve ever seen it done.”

VIEWS: And there could be more to come, Harbaugh added.

“Everything is possible for this game; anything could be changed, anything could be added,” he said. “You don’t mind your opponents knowing that all things are possible.”

Brown has added different wrinkles and some zone, and for the “why didn’t he do it sooner?” crowd — well, he didn’t really have to. His defenses were more than good enough to win the two previous Ohio State games, and to their credit, teams like Indiana and OSU found a weak spot.

And guess what? It happens. As former Michigan head basketball coach John Beilein said after one of the Michigan State games last year, “I still learn and see different and new things after 40 years of coaching.” It’s how you adjust that defines you as a coach, and once again, Brown’s defense is among the best in the country.

NEWS: Michigan’s receiving corps is playing its best football of the year heading into the Ohio State game. Harbaugh said offensive coordinator Josh Gattis has been “the best I’ve seen” in coaching them up.

HARBAUGH: “They’ve really jelled. I’ve seen our receivers really hungry to learn and take coaching. Josh brings it, [he’s] the same coach every single day … high enthusiasm, a lot of coaching, a lot of detail. I think our guys like it.”

VIEWS: A couple of these guys were the weak link on the offense earlier in the year, especially in the effort areas. Harbaugh addressed it after the Wisconsin game, and by the Michigan State game most had come full circle. The blocking on the edge — sophomore Ronnie Bell had always been good in that area, but now others have started following his lead.

Junior Donovan Peoples-Jones is finally playing at the level most expected of him, while Collins has elevated his game. Bell occasionally drops a few balls, but he’s still the best route runner of the bunch, and freshmen Mike Sainristil and Giles Jackson are coming on strong and showing signs of becoming very good receivers.

If redshirt sophomore Tarik Black continues his ascent and frosh Cornelius Johnson improves, this group could be very good next year. Even if just one of Collins or Peoples-Jones comes back, it will be dangerous.

Wolverine Watch: Michigan Fans Want To Believe Again

John Borton • *The Wolverine*

Drifting from dreams to drowsy consciousness on Michigan-Ohio State Saturday once involved a surreal, magical sensation. For Wolverines fans young and old, realization suddenly overcame sleepiness.

This is it. This is That Day. This is The Game.

The feeling mirrored the childlike elation of waking up on Christmas morning, knowing there were presents to be opened and endless fun to be shared.

It was a thrill proving almost irrepressible. The sheer joy and frenzied excitement spilled into a leap from the bed, and an ecstatic energy shared with others in the household.

A generation grew up without that feeling. Michigan fans in their mid-20s know little to nothing of the boundless anticipation over the titanic clash, the greatest rivalry in sport, The Ten-Year War, Bo and Woody, 10-2-1, Woodson and ’97 perfection, etc.

They know this is the big game Michigan loses. It’s been so since they were 10 years old. They hope, they watch and then they dream about what it used to be like, from the tales their parents tell them.

They wake up wondering if Michigan can keep it close, avoid disaster, have a chance to win it at the end. Maybe even break through like they did in 2011, when they were in their teens.

Ohio State fans love to dismissively spit that it's not even a rivalry anymore. It's tough to tell them they're wrong, in a bottom-line sense.

Tom Crawford remembers it differently. The Michigan alum, U-M media stalwart in the cold, miserable outpost of East Lansing, knows it wasn't always this way. He sat in the stands exactly 50 years ago, when the Wolverines pulled off the all-time upset — 24-12, against Woody Hayes' unbeatable Ohio State squad.

Crawford, like so many Michigan watchers, longs for this present madness to end.

"You have analysts like Howard Griffith on the Big Ten Network, and they're talking about, what if Michigan doesn't win this game, what's that going to do to the rivalry," Crawford mused on The Wolverine Podcast.

"It's going to be 15 out of 16 and eight in a row, and blah, blah, blah ... There's a lot of doom and gloom that's thrown Michigan fans' way.

"You kind of buy into that. And that's unfortunate."

What happened to get it to this point? Two decisions, each of the rivalry-shaking variety.

One, the Buckeyes sold their collective soul to wipe out all memory of the John Cooper era and win bigger than ever. They hired Jim Tressel, who would eventually be forced to pack his bags for cheating on NCAA rules and repeatedly lying to the governing body about it.

Tressel won big, and despite his disgraced exit, returned to a hero's welcome in Columbus. Sold their soul? Buckeye fans still revel in that transaction.

Tressel begat Urban Meyer, who "retired" after a season in which he was suspended for harboring (and lying about his knowledge of) an alleged wife-beater of an assistant coach. But he won ...

Meanwhile, after Lloyd Carr retired, Michigan "ripped the tree out by its roots," noted one long-time observer close to the program. The Wolverines didn't need a cheater or a liar, but they needed continuity, torn away by the worst swing-and-a-miss in four Michigan football decades.

Jim Harbaugh is trying to replant the tree — not in a Bo-like fashion, but with similar philosophical underpinnings.

If you cheat, you've already lost.

He's come close to taking down the Buckeyes. He's made it a competitive game again, last year's nightmare notwithstanding. He's yet to break down the door, though, and many like Crawford are anxiously waiting.

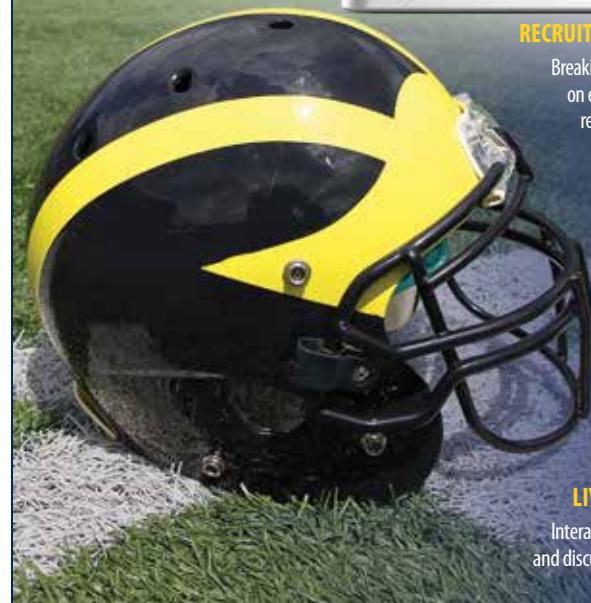
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"My approach to this game is, I'm going back into that old era where I just have this gut feeling, just like I did in '93, when Michigan had no pressure on them and they buried Ohio State, 28-0," Crawford said.

"The same thing with '95, winning that game [31-23]. I was down at Ohio State in '96, on the road. Ohio State was No. 2, Michigan had no shot, and Chris Howard kept running for first downs. Brian Griese hit Tai Streets, and we know the history.

"I'm completely defaulting back into that history. I feel really confident about what's going to happen at noon on Saturday."

He points out the Wolverines have outscored opponents 180-52 since halftime of the Penn State game. He acknowledges the Buckeyes haven't exactly played a fearsome road schedule: Indiana, Nebraska, Northwestern and Rutgers, who are a combined 7-25 in conference play.

He says of his beloved Wolverines: "They're a hot team right now, and they're at home. Granted, Ohio State fans will come, and they'll try to bully their way in and try to intimidate Michigan fans. Michigan fans have got to stay strong and make it miserable for Ohio State."

It's been miserable for Michigan far too long. But there are many, like Crawford, ready to ride The Harbaugh Express back to the North Pole. They're ready to have their ticket punched "B-E-L-I-E-V-E," and they can still hear the bell ringing, if faintly.

"I think they're going to win," he said.

It's the present many would trade for anything under the tree this season.

By The Numbers: Key To Beating OSU May Rest On Shea Patterson's Shoulders

Austin Fox • TheWolverine

The Michigan Wolverines' football passing attack has performed at an elite level each of the last two weeks, with senior quarterback Shea Patterson leading the charge.

He first carved up Michigan State for 384 yards and four touchdown in U-M's 44-10 beatdown of the Spartans on Nov. 16, and then followed it up by compiling 366 yards and five scores last weekend in the Wolverines' 39-14 win at Indiana.

The Maize and Blue's hopes of defeating an undefeated 11-0 Ohio State squad this Saturday in Ann Arbor may once again rest on Patterson's shoulders and the suddenly high-powered Michigan passing attack.

Not only were the senior's performances against Michigan State and Indiana among the best of the Jim Harbaugh era (since 2015), but they rank as some of the best in the 140-year football history of the school (though it should be noted the forward pass did not become legal in collegiate football until 1906).

Patterson's 384 yards against the Spartans were the fifth most in a game in school history, and were 99 more yards than any Wolverine quarterback had ever compiled against the Green and White (current New England Patriots signal-caller Tom Brady had held the previous record, with 285 in 1999).

The senior's four scoring tosses against Michigan State also made him just the 16th quarterback ever at U-M to accumulate at least four TD passes in a single game.

Patterson then became the first Wolverine field general to throw four or more scores in back-to-back outings when he racked up five against the Hoosiers, with the latter statistic standing as the second most in a single contest ever at Michigan.

Quarterbacks Who Have Thrown Four Or More Touchdowns In A Game In Michigan History		
TD Passes	Quarterback	Season (Game)
6	Jake Rudock	2015 (at Indiana)
5	Shea Patterson	2019 (at Indiana)
4	Tom Brady	1999 (vs. Alabama)
4	Todd Collins	1992 (Houston)
4	Scott Dreisbach	1996 (Michigan State)
4	Devin Gardner	2013 (Notre Dame, Ohio State)
4	Elvis Grbac	1990 (vs. Ole Miss) 1991 (Florida State) 1992 (Minnesota)
4	Brian Griese	1995 (Minnesota)
4	Chad Henne	2004 (Michigan State, vs. Texas) 2007 (at Michigan State)
4	Drew Henson	2000 (at Northwestern)
4	John Navarre	2000 (Bowling Green) 2002 (Western Michigan, at Illinois)
4	Shea Patterson	2019 (Michigan State)
4	Denard Robinson	2011 (Notre Dame)
4	Steve Smith	1983 (Purdue)
4	Wilton Speight	2016 (UCF)
4	Michael Taylor	1989 (at Minnesota)
4	Chris Zurbrugg	1984 (at Purdue)

The 10 Best Single-Game Passing Performances in Michigan History

Quarterback	Yards	Game (Season)	Result
1. Devin Gardner	503	Indiana (2013)	W, 53-47
2. Devin Gardner	451	Ohio State (2013)	L, 42-41
3. Jake Rudock	440	at Indiana (2015)	W, 48-41
4. John Navarre	389	at Iowa (2003)	L, 30-27
5. Shea Patterson	384	Michigan State (2019)	W, 44-10
6. Tom Brady	375	at Ohio State (1998)	L, 31-16
7. Chad Henne	373	vs. Florida (2007)	W, 41-35
8. Scott Dresbach	372	Virginia (1995)	W, 18-17
9. Tom Brady	369	vs. Alabama (1999)	W, 35-34
10. Shea Patterson	366	at Indiana (2019)	W, 39-14

Patterson and the Michigan passing attack will be facing the best secondary they have seen all season on Saturday, with Ohio State's pass defense ranking No. 1 in the country (only allowing 126.2 yards per game).

OSU has held six of its 11 opponents to 128 passing yards or fewer, and hasn't allowed more than 218 in a game all year.

Nine of the 11 offenses Ohio State has faced currently stand 60th nationally or lower in passing yards per outing, however, with five of the 11 ranking 110th or worse (out of 130 teams).

At No. 50 overall (247.5 yards per tilt), Michigan's passing attack will statistically be the third best the Buckeyes have seen in 2019, behind Indiana at No. 14 and Florida Atlantic at No. 22.

Most would agree the Maize and Blue's receiving group consists of better athletes than that of the Hoosiers or Owls, especially when considering how juniors Nico Collins (165 yards and three touchdowns on Saturday) and Donovan Peoples-Jones (scoring grabs in three of his last four games), and sophomore Ronnie Bell (a career-high 150 yards in the MSU win) have been playing as of late.

At 6-4, 222 pounds, Collins will have at least a three-inch advantage on whichever cornerback is covering him on Saturday, with OSU's primary corner trio of fifth-year senior Damon Arnette, junior Jeffrey Okudah and redshirt sophomore Shaun Wade all standing 6-1 or shorter.

The Wolverines have finally begun to take advantage of Collins' mismatch abilities in recent weeks, targeting him an average of 6.2 times over his last five games (the junior was only targeted 4.2 times per outing through the season's first five affairs).

Collins was thrown to seven times each against both Michigan State and Indiana, after being targeted more than five times in a game only once prior to the MSU showdown (nine in the Oct. 19 loss at Penn State).

BY THE NUMBERS: OHIO STATE AT MICHIGAN

1st Touchdown catch for Bell on Saturday since the Oct. 6 win over Maryland last season. The sophomore endured a string of 17 straight tilts without a TD grab despite entering that game as the team's leading receiver.

4 Of the last eight games in the Ohio State rivalry have been decided by six points or fewer, dating back to 2011. Michigan holds just a 1-3 record in those contests, however, pulling out a 40-34 triumph in 2011. Its three narrow setbacks occurred in 2012 (26-21), 2013 (42-41) and 2016 (30-27).

11-Point margin of victory for OSU over Penn State last Saturday (28-17), which was the closest game the Buckeyes had played all year. Prior to the win, Ohio State's closest triumphs had been by 24 points (34-10 over MSU and 45-21 over Florida Atlantic).

13-Game winning streak for U-M in Ann Arbor, dating back to the Nov. 25, 2017 loss to Ohio State. Only two of those 13 home victories have been decided by fewer than 11 points (the 24-21 triumph over Army on Sept. 7 and the 10-3 win over Iowa on Oct. 5). The Maize and Blue are 30-4 overall at home under Harbaugh.

20.9 Yards per catch for Collins this season, which is the best mark in the Big Ten and the eighth best in college football. The junior has averaged at least 21 yards per reception in five of the 10 games he has played in this year (missed the Oct. 12 victory at Illinois with injury).

23rd Time that Michigan and Ohio State will meet up as Associated Press top-10 clubs (OSU is currently ranked No. 2 and U-M is No. 10). The Buckeyes hold a slight 11-9-2 advantage in the first 22 such meetings, though the Wolverines have won seven of the last 10.

33-1 Touchdown-to-interception ratio for OSU sophomore quarterback Justin Fields this season, to go along with a 69.4 completion percentage. His 33 scoring tosses are tied with Alabama junior quarterback Tua Tagovailoa for the third most in college football.

70 Percent chance of precipitation on Saturday in Ann Arbor, with forecasts calling for a rain/snow mix. High temperatures are expected to hit 38 degrees with maximum wind gusts anticipated to reach 13 miles-per-hour.

Updates On Every Former Michigan Wolverine In The NFL: Week 12

Ryan Tice • TheWolverine

Through 11 games, former Michigan Wolverines football safety Jabrill Peppers was just four tackles shy of setting a new career best and had already set single-season highs with three forced fumbles and tied his previous best with six passes defended, in addition to scoring his first NFL touchdown after an interception.

It will take a huge recovery from Peppers to be able to improve upon those numbers.

The Giants announced Monday afternoon that Peppers had suffered a transverse process fracture in his back on Sunday, but head coach Pat Shurmur did not indicate it was a definite season-ender.

“My understanding, his too, in terms of the evaluation of it, as I knew [Sunday] he had a sore back. I guess he can return; it’s kind of relative to pain tolerance,” the coach said according to ESPN.com. “So, I would say no [to season-ending].”

With the Giants at 2-9 on the year, others weren’t as optimistic.

The injury occurred on a kickoff that ran out the first-half clock; it was Peppers’ first kickoff runback of the season — and he was reportedly the one that asked to have a chance to return it. This came after he set a new NFL best with a 40-yard punt return earlier in the game.

“I’m tough. I’m hoping it’s something I can tough through,” Peppers said, per ESPN, immediately after the game.

The 24-year-old safety was enjoying the best season of his three-year professional career and leading the Giants in tackles. As things stand now, despite missing the entire second half Sunday, he is tied for seventh in the league with three forced fumbles and 35th tackles. Only nine players have more tackles than Peppers and can match his six passes defended.

A full roundup of what former players in the NFL did this past week is below:

OG Ben Braden, New York Jets

After he was released by the Green Bay Packers Nov. 7, he returned to the practice squad of the 4-7 Jets, where he has spent much of the past two seasons before being cut in September.

QB Tom Brady, New England Patriots

Completed 17 of 37 passes (45.9 percent) for 190 yards and a touchdown ... He has started all 11 games for the 10-1 Patriots, who are tied for the best record in the league ... On the year, Brady is 273-of-439 passing (62.2 percent) for 2,942 yards, 15 touchdowns and five interceptions ... He has a passer rating of 88.5 and has also rushed for three scores ... He is fifth in the NFL in passing yards.

TE Ian Bunting, Indianapolis Colts

After being released by the Jets, he was signed to the 6-5 Colts’ practice squad, where he still resides.

LB Devin Bush Jr., Pittsburgh Steelers

Started and record four tackles with a huge forced fumble and QB hit in the 6-5 Steelers’ 16-10 win over the Bengals ... On the year, he has started 10 times, played in every game and logged 79 tackles (49 solo) with one sack, four passes broken up, two interceptions, four fumble recoveries — one of which he returned for a touchdown — and a forced fumble ... Is tied for 30th in the league in total stops and tied for first in fumble recoveries ... Only seven players have more tackles and at least six passes defended like Bush ... He leads all rookies in tackles by two and fumble recoveries by two, and is one of just two first-year players with two picks ... Also ranks fourth among rookies with six passes defended.

TE Jake Butt, Denver Broncos

On injured reserve with the 3-8 Broncos after a setback in his quest to return from a torn ACL.

DE Taco Charlton, Miami Dolphins

Returned after missing last week’s game with an elbow injury and was on defense for 20 snaps (15 percent of that unit’s time on the field) but did not post any statistics ... Has started five times and appeared in eight games with Miami, and recorded 18 tackles with one forced fumble and a career-high 4.0 sacks.

WR Jehu Chesson, Washington Redskins

Is on injured reserve for 2-9 Washington.

DE Frank Clark, Kansas City Chiefs

Clark and the 7-4 Chiefs were off this past weekend ... He has a sack in each of his last two games and his last three appearances ... Has started eight times and appeared in nine games while logging 26 tackles, 5.0 sacks, one interception, three forced fumbles, three passes broken up and a fumble recovery ... Is tied for seventh in the league in forced fumbles.

OL Mason Cole, Arizona Cardinals

Cole and the 3-7-1 Cardinals were off this past weekend ... Has appeared in all 11 games this year with two starts.

CB Blake Countess, New York Jets

Played nine special teams snaps in the 4-7 Jets’ 34-3 win over Oakland ... Has appeared in five games this year, but has not recorded any statistics.

WR Amara Darboh, Pittsburgh Steelers

Is on the 6-5 Steelers' practice squad.

WR Devin Funchess, Indianapolis Colts

Reportedly returned to practice Nov. 13 after breaking his collarbone in week one ... Has 21 days from that date to be moved to the active roster or reverted back to injured reserve (IR), which would end his campaign ... Hauled in three passes for 32 yards before getting hurt.

LB Rashan Gary, Green Bay Packers

Played as a reserve (13 defensive snaps) and on special teams in the 8-3 Packers' 37-8 loss to the 49ers, but did not record any statistics ... Has seen action in every game off the bench and logged 12 tackles with one sack and one fumble recovery.

LB Ben Gedeon, Minnesota Vikings

Gedeon and the 8-3 Vikings were off this past week ... Has made 13 stops while starting five times and appearing in eight games.

TE Zach Gentry, Pittsburgh Steelers

Was inactive in the 6-5 Steelers' 16-10 win over the Bengals ... Has appeared in three games, but has not recorded any statistics outside of a fumble recovery.

OL Graham Glasgow, Detroit Lions

Started at center for the first time this year and played every snap in the 3-7-1 Lions' 19-16 loss to Washington ... Recovered one of his teammate's fumbles ... Has started in all 10 appearances he's made this year (nine at right guard, one at center).

DT Ryan Glasgow, Cincinnati Bengals

Is on injured reserve, but had appeared in five games with two starts for 0-11 Cincinnati and totaled seven tackles.

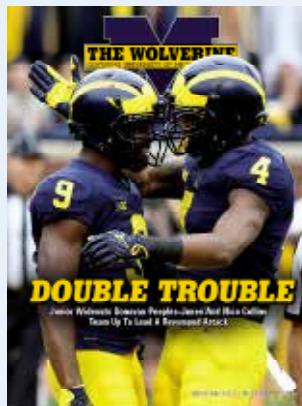
DE Brandon Graham, Philadelphia Eagles

Started, and tallied 1.5 sacks and assisted on another stop, in the 5-6 Eagles' 17-9 loss to Seattle ... Has started each outing for Philly and racked up 37 tackles (26 solo) with 7.5 sacks, one forced fumble and two fumble recoveries ... Is tied for 18th in the NFL in sacks with the second-highest total of his career ... Just two sacks away from tying his career best.

QB Chad Henne, Kansas City Chiefs

Henne and the 7-4 Chiefs were off this week ... He was returned from injury but has not been active for a game yet this year.

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RB Karan Higdon, Houston Texans

Is on the 7-4 Texans' practice squad.

S Lano Hill, Seattle Seahawks

Returned from an elbow injury that held him out for four weeks and played on special teams in the 9-2 Seahawks' 17-9 win over the Eagles, but did not record any statistics ... Has played in seven of 11 games with two starts and made eight tackles.

DT Maurice Hurst, Oakland Raiders

Came off the bench to assist on a tackle in the 6-5 Raiders' 34-3 loss to the Jets ... Has started twice and appeared in all 11 games while making 14 tackles with 2.5 sacks, one pass broken up and a fumble recovery.

OL Kyle Kalis, Oakland Raiders

Was picked up for the 6-5 Raiders' practice squad in late October.

FB Joe Kerridge, Free Agent

Had been on injured reserve with the Browns most of the year, but was recently released.

OT Taylor Lewan, Tennessee Titans

Started at left tackle in the 6-5 Titans' 42-20 win over the Jaguars ... Was injured in the first quarter on a cheap shot but eventually returned to play 45 of the team's 53 offensive snaps (85 percent) ... Has started all seven games since returning from a four-game suspension and has only missed 10 snaps due to injury.

CB Jourdan Lewis, Dallas Cowboys

Started and played 79 percent of his team's defensive snaps and also on special teams in the 6-5 Cowboys' 13-9 loss to the Patriots ... Finished with two tackles ... On the year, he has recorded 23 tackles (17 solo), one sack, an interception that he returned 20 yards and a fumble recovery that he ran back 63 yards for a touchdown in 11 games (two starts).

CB David Long, Los Angeles Rams

Played on defense (seven snaps) and special teams (18) and tallied a tackle in the 6-5 Rams' 45-6 loss to Baltimore ... Has made five tackles in five games played on the year.

OL Erik Magnuson, Oakland Raiders

Was not active in the 6-5 Raiders' 34-3 loss to the Jets ... Has appeared in one game since being signed off the Bills' practice squad.

DT Bryan Mone, Seattle Seahawks

Is on the 8-3 Seahawks' practice squad once again ... Has appeared in three games and made three tackles.

OL Patrick Omameh, New Orleans Saints

Played on special teams and a season-high 56 offensive snaps at left tackle in the 9-2 Saints' 34-31 win over the Panthers ... Has appeared in nine contests this year as a reserve ... Omameh might be called upon to start on a short week Thursday if All-Pro Terron Armstead is not able to return.

S Jabrill Peppers, New York Giants

Started at strong safety and notched five tackles, including one for loss, in the 2-9 Giants' 19-14 loss to the Bears ... He also returned a punt 40 yards (below) and a kickoff 23 yards ... Though he has returned only four punts, his average of 12.3 yards is second in the league ... On the year, he has started every game and posted 76 tackles (51 solo) and five passes broken up with one interception (a pick-six) and three forced fumbles.

QB Jake Rudock, Miami Dolphins

Is on the 2-9 Dolphins' practice squad.

LB Jake Ryan, Jacksonville Jaguars

On the reserve/non-football injury list for the 4-7 Jaguars after suffering an offseason setback during his rehab from a torn ACL.

OL Michael Schofield, Los Angeles Chargers

Schofield and the 4-7 Chargers were off this week ... He has not missed a snap yet this year while starting all 11 contests at right guard.

CB Brandon Watson, Jacksonville Jaguars

Appeared in his third straight game — this time the 4-7 Jaguars fell 42-20 to the Titans ... Downed a punt and played on special teams but did not record any statistics ... Has seen time in three games this year and made one tackle.

S Jarrod Wilson, Jacksonville Jaguars

Started and notched five tackles in the 4-7 Jaguars' 42-20 loss to the Titans ... Has started each game this year and played every snap ... In 11 games, he has logged 53 stops (40 solo) with one interception, two passes broken up and a forced fumble.

DE Chase Winovich, New England Patriots

Played 11 defensive snaps and on special teams in the 10-1 Patriots' 13-9 win over the Cowboys ... Tallied a pair of solo stops ... On the year, he has posted 16 tackles

(12 solo) with 4.5 sacks, plus a touchdown after a blocked punt ... Ranks fifth among rookies in sacks.

DE Chris Wormley, Baltimore Ravens

Was in for 14 defensive snaps and also played on special teams while notching a pair of stops in the 9-2 Ravens' 45-6 win over the Rams ... Has seen action in all 11 contests so far and made four starts with 15 tackles, one sack and one pass broken up.

Notebook: Ryan Day Previews Rivalry Matchup With Michigan

Clayton Sayfie • The Wolverine

Ohio State (11-0, 8-0 Big Ten) has already clinched a berth to the Big Ten championship game in Indianapolis on Dec. 6, but it has one last regular-season game against the Michigan Wolverines (9-2, 6-2 Big Ten) before heading into postseason play.

Buckeyes' head coach Ryan Day met with media Tuesday and fielded question after question about U-M. Day talked about the matchup with the Wolverines, and what it will be like to be the head coach in this rivalry for the first time.

Buckeyes Head Coach Ryan Day On The Michigan-Ohio State Rivalry

Both Day and U-M head coach Jim Harbaugh have said this week that their respective programs prepare all year long for playing each other. Day says OSU starts preparing its players for the game even before they step on campus as students.

"In recruiting, we talk to them right from the get-go," Day said about the U-M rivalry. "It's one of the reasons why some people go to school here, for the rivalry because we make such a big deal of it. When you walk in the building, it's all over the place and we talk about it all the time. We talk about it in recruiting and all different areas, whether it's strength and conditioning or football or any of the other areas. It's something that you just ingrain. The more these guys are in the program, the more they get it. The majority of our guys are from the area, so they get it."

"We take a lot of pride in recruiting the state of Ohio. We put their recruiting list on the board and compare our guys to theirs just about every day, every week. ... That's just a part of how you live this rivalry is you compare yourselves every day against them. We take a lot of pride in the fact that we recruit Ohio at a high level, and we're very competitive. They do a good job, too. They have good recruiters and, obviously, a wonderful program. It's always a big challenge."

That's right. There's a board on the wall in the Ohio State coaches' office that com-

pares the Buckeyes and the Wolverines, and how they're each doing on the recruiting trail.

"It's been there since I got here," Day said. "It just gives you some awareness of where we're at and the battles that we're in for certain guys. We rank our people, and we want to know exactly who those guys are because we're going to be playing them. That's what's really important."

"Sometimes, in recruiting, you don't worry about the guys you don't get, you worry about the guys you do get,. But when you're going against the team up north, you know you're going to be playing against them, so it does matter who you don't get. We just look at that very carefully."

Day says preparing every day of every year for U-M makes it easier for when the game week actually comes.

"If you're working on it all year, then you're prepared," Day said. "Whether you work on it in the spring, in the preseason, you have certain periods that you set aside just to work on the team up north. You talk to your guys about what it means, and so they understand coming into the game what to expect. It's always on the schedule that way. We have the countdown and everything like that. I think everybody understands the importance of it."

"When you're talking about the game itself, it goes back to the fundamentals and taking care of the football, executing the game plan, giving the players a good game plan that they can execute."

In the past, Day has made it clear that he looks at replacing Urban Meyer (who was 7-0 against U-M) as the Buckeyes' head coach as an opportunity, not as pressure.

"I'm trying to do the best I can to make it like every week, but we all know it's not," he said. "We do a little extra here, a little extra there, to make sure we're covering every little scenario we can, making sure we let the guys have a great plan. If you start to overdo things, you can get a little jammed up, and that's why we do all the work ahead of time."

"That's why we live it 365 [days a year], so when you get here, to the week, you don't have to come up with an unbelievable speech on a Tuesday. The guys know what it is, and you can put the focus more on giving them a good plan, making sure things are tight and spending your focus on making sure the guys are prepared."

Day has been around the rivalry since joining the Ohio State staff prior to the 2017 season, but said he can't pinpoint a single moment that reiterated the importance of the annual matchup with U-M.

"I don't think it was just one moment," Day said. "There's a lot of moments because it's every day. There's a lot of moments. The most memorable for me is that when they talk about throwing out the records and that anything can happen in this game is what happened to [former quarterback] JT [Barrett]."

"Just as we're about to kickoff the game [in 2017], I hear JT's hurt and can't go in the game. I was like, 'Okay, here we go. We're in the rivalry game.' We had to adjust there and then he played in the first half, and then Dwayne [Haskins] had to come in and go win the game."

"... For me, seeing what this means to the people of Ohio and the Buckeye nation, that's where it really hits home to me, and it strikes in my heart, strongly. I just see that this is everything."

"I know that the Ohio State football team means everything to the people of Ohio. It runs deep in their blood. It's who they are, it's their identity, it's their pride. To be the Ohio State head football coach, that's an unbelievable responsibility."

Day Previews Michigan

Day was the offensive coordinator a year ago when the Buckeyes put up 62 points on the U-M defense. Since then, the Wolverines and Don Brown have made adjustments. Day says that they expect to see a different look this year.

"This is a whole new year," Day pointed out. "We look at the film a little bit to see what they did. But they're going to make adjustments on all that stuff. They're very well-coached. We don't really look at that much, at all. We're really looking at this year and what we do, what they're doing. Their personnel is different now and what they're doing is significantly different."

"They've gone to a lot more zone and they mix it up. Coach Brown does a great job of that. He's always had a lot of different coverages and a lot of different looks. I'm sure we'll see a lot of them on Saturday."

"Nobody gives more different looks than Don Brown. I know he takes a lot of pride in that. ... What he does a great job of is he puts his guys in positions to be successful. Some of those things last year may have seemed like man when they were zone. He changes it up, he does a good job, and I know he'll do a great job this weekend."

Brown and Day have worked together in the past and have a good relationship.

"He actually coached against me when

I played, then coached my brother at UMass and then we coached together at Boston College," Day said of Brown. "Now, we get an opportunity to coach against each other in a huge rivalry game, which makes it hard. But I have nothing but respect for his background and what he's done defensively over the years. He's one of the best guys in the business."

The U-M offense has ascended in recent weeks and has put up 38 points or more in each of the last four games.

"I've thought that since halftime of the Penn State game, they've really played good football," Day said of the U-M offense. "[Quarterback Shea] Patterson is throwing the ball well and the receivers are good — [Nico] Collins, [Donovan] Peoples-Jones. I think the tight ends are good. The offensive line did a really good job against Notre Dame.

"They've got a good scheme; they've got a lot of really good coaches there. They've kind of found a rhythm in the second half of the season here, so it'll probably be our biggest challenge again. As we've gone on in the season, I think we've been challenged more and more. This will be the most talented group we've seen by far."

"They're sound and they do a good job. I think, at the end of the day, it comes down to players and I don't think they're going to do anything that's going to be anything that we probably haven't seen, but maybe they will. I think, at the end of the day, it's going to come down to execution and guys winning their one-on-one battles."

Day has noticed how well Patterson is playing at the moment, after the signal-caller has thrown for 750 yards and nine touchdowns in his last two outings.

"I do see him being more confident and I see a group that feels like they've found an identity," Day said. "They've got really good receivers, and those receivers are talented. The offensive line is giving them time. I don't know what made it all click, but it seems like it's going well right now for them."

U-M is the most talented team OSU will play all season, Day reiterated.

"They have the ability to be as good as anyone in the country when they're play-

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ing well,” he said. “I think they’re playing their best football now and we’ll get their best shot on Saturday.”

Day On Greg Mattison and Al Washington

OSU poached former U-M assistants Greg Mattison and Al Washington in the off-season. Mattison was the Wolverines’ defensive line coach for the last eight seasons, while Washington spent last year coaching the U-M linebackers before joining Day’s staff at OSU. Mattison is now the co-defensive coordinator for OSU and Washington coaches the linebackers.

Day was asked if he will lean on the two former U-M assistants for insight on their rival and what he thinks their emotions will be heading into the game.

“Here and there, but they’re busy getting their side ready to go,” he said. “I’m sure there’s a range of emotions, and when they get on the bus and head up there, there will be even more.

“It’s just one of those things that’s part of the job. You work through it and they’ll be really professional about it. They know a lot is riding on this game and they want to do great for their players and for their families and everything like that, but I’m sure there’s a lot of emotions for them.”

When asked if one of the reasons why he hired Mattison and Washington was because he could take them away from his top rival, Day said no.

“The major attraction is that I knew both of them really well,” Day said. “One of them [Washington], I was a coach when he played and then I coached with him. The other one [Mattison], I coached with and have a tremendous amount of respect for.”

also need to have the Buckeyes win the Big Ten the next week and advance to the College Football Playoff. U-M could end up being the next-highest-ranked Big Ten team and would head to Pasadena, if that is the case.

With the Wolverines being more than a touchdown underdog at home this weekend against OSU, though, bowl projections have U-M heading to several bowl games, none of them named the Rose Bowl.

Here’s where several national publications have projected for where U-M will end up come bowl season:

- **Steven Lassan, Athlon Sports:**

Michigan vs. Tennessee in the Gator Bowl (Jan. 2, 7 p.m. on ESPN)

- **Kyle Bonagura and Mark Schlabach, ESPN:**

Bonagura: Michigan vs. Tennessee in the Gator Bowl

Schlabach: Michigan vs. USC in the San Diego County Credit Union Holiday Bowl (Dec. 27, 8 p.m. on Fox Sports 1)

- **Bill Bender, Sporting News:**

Michigan vs. Auburn in the Buffalo Wild Wings Citrus Bowl (Jan. 1, 1 p.m. on ABC)

- **Brett McMurphy, Stadium:**

Michigan vs. Auburn in the Buffalo Wild Wings Citrus Bowl

- **Jerry Palm, CBS Sports:**

Michigan vs. Mississippi State in the Gator Bowl

- **Stewart Mandel, The Athletic:**

Michigan vs. Arizona State in the Holiday Bowl.

- **Joe Tansey, Bleacher Report:**

Michigan vs. Tennessee in the Gator Bowl

- **College Football News:**

Michigan vs. Washington in the San Diego County Credit Union Holiday Bowl

Most common destination: Gator Bowl, four out of nine projections

Most common opponent: Tennessee (3), Auburn (2)

Michigan Wolverines Bowl Game Projections After Week 13

Clayton Sayfie • TheWolverine

The Michigan Wolverines football team (9-2, 6-2 Big Ten) ascended to No. 10 in the AP top 25 ahead of their big matchup with arch rival Ohio State (11-0, 8-0 Big Ten).

After the 39-14 win over Indiana last week, U-M continues to have a shot to be the Big Ten’s representative in the Rose Bowl if they beat OSU. The Wolverines would