

OHIO STATE 2024 FOOTBALL PREVIEW



'Natty or bust'

**Ohio State all in
on winning it all**

Section D
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The Lima News

Ohio State has assembled impressive roster

By Jim Naveau
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COLUMBUS — Since the mid-1990s the years Ohio State has gone into a college football season seeming to have a chance to compete for a national championship probably outnumber the years it didn't by a comfortable margin.

The Associated Press poll voters have made the Buckeyes No. 1 or No. 2 in their preseason poll 11 times since 2003. Their fans, players and coaches have probably thought they were contenders many more times and they were probably correct.

Once again this season Ohio State, No. 2 behind Georgia in the preseason poll, seems positioned to make a run at joining the 2002 team and the 2014 team as the only Buckeyes teams to win national championships in the era of head-to-head competition on the field in a title game.

But this year feels different than those previous years. The expectations are higher than ever. The way teams are assembled has dramatically changed.



Don Speck | The Lima News
Ohio State defensive end Jack Sawyer puts pressure on Penn State quarterback Drew Allar during a game last season. Sawyer is one of a large group of NFL draft eligible players who chose to return to OSU for this season.

Players have much more freedom to choose where they play and can receive financial rewards for their services. And the process of choosing a champion is different now that 12 teams qualify for the College Football Playoff.

This year's team on paper might be among the most talented teams Ohio State has had, though there are still some questions going into the opener against Akron on Saturday. For sure, no OSU team before this year has added as much proven experienced talent in such

a short time as the 2024 Buckeyes.

Thanks to the transfer portal, players like quarterback Will Howard, safety Caleb Downs, center Seth McLaughlin, running back Quinshon Judkins and quarterback Julian Sayin were added to the Buckeyes' roster.

Howard, who had 27 career starts at Kansas State, will be the starting quarterback. Downs, who was Alabama's best defensive player as a freshman last season, will make an already strong defensive backfield even better. Jud-



Don Speck | The Lima News
Running back TreVeyon Henderson celebrates after scoring a touchdown against Michigan last year. With Henderson and Quinshon Judkins carrying the ball and new offensive coordinator Chip Kelly calling the plays the run game could be emphasized more at OSU this season.

kins, a first-team All-Southeastern Conference running back at Ole Miss, will share time with TreVeyon Henderson. McLaughlin will be the starting center. And Sayin, a freshman who was regarded as Alabama's quarterback of the future, could now become OSU's starting quarterback next season.

Maybe even more impor-

tantly, Ohio State was just as good at talent retention as it was at acquiring that new talent.

Ten years ago, five years ago, even three years ago before six- and seven-figure NIL deals, seeing nine of Ohio State's top draft-eligible underclassmen choose another year of col-

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Impressive

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lege football over the NFL draft would have seemed extremely unlikely.

But that's what defensive ends J.T. Tuimoloau and Jack Sawyer, wide receiver Emeka Egbuka, cornerbacks Denzel Burke and Jordan Hancock, safety Lathan Ransom, offensive lineman Donovan Jackson, defensive lineman Tyleik Williams and Henderson did.

"A lot of us had great opportunities to go to the next level and it was tough for a lot of us to come back," Sawyer said. "Obviously it's been a dream of all of us playing at this level to play at the next level since we've been little kids. So making that decision to forego going to the NFL to come back and play one more year was a very tough decision for a lot of guys and myself.

"We came back for one purpose and one goal and that's to beat the team up north (Michigan) and win a national championship," he said.

Burke created an unofficial motto for that pursuit of the national championship during spring practice when he said,

"It's natty or bust. That's our mentality. No excuses. We've got to win it all. That's what we're trying to do.

"We're trying to preach that every single day. Our goal is to go out there every Saturday, hold each other accountable, play hard, make plays and turn the ball over.

At Big Ten football media days in July he

said, "Natty or bust. I put it out there to get the younger guys and transfers to understand that I ain't come back for no b.s. We're here to win it all and we're going to need everybody. We've got to hold each other accountable and every game is a match-up game. No matter who we're playing it's our job to just take them out and dominate.

"I feel like we have all the chips in. We have a lot of talent but talent doesn't mean anything. You've still got to line up and put the football down and compete. We have one common goal and we can't let anything get in the way of that," he said.

There also might be a little more urgency, or at least impatience, to get to the postseason and succeed there because of three straight losses to rival Michigan and watching the Wolverines win last season's national championship.

"The past few years were three seasons where we came up short against those guys. I'd be lying if I told you it didn't burn a fire inside of us. It's definitely something we think about. We know what's at stake when we play those guys," Sawyer said.

"All of our goals and aspirations for the season ride on that one game in November. They hate us, we hate them. That's the way it's got to be. That's the way we want it to be. That's what makes the rivalry so much fun."

Burke said, "It's not something we try to emphasize daily but it's definitely something that's in the back of our heads, especially the guys who

came back for this year. That's what we want to be able to do — get our gold pants, win every single game, win a national championship."

With USC, UCLA, Oregon and Washington joining the Big Ten this season, the conference eliminated its divisions. This year's Big Ten championship game will be between the two teams with the best records.

The College Football Playoff will also look different after expanding to 12 teams.

The College Football Playoff committee will determine the 12 teams who will be in the playoff. Those teams will be the five highest-ranked conference champions and the next seven teams in the CFP rankings. No conference automatically gets one of the 7 through 12 spots and there is no limit on the number of teams from a conference.

The four highest-ranked conference champions, presumably from the Big Ten, SEC, ACC and Big 12, get first-round byes.

First-round games will be Dec. 20 at 8 p.m. and Dec. 21 at noon, 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. at the stadium of the higher ranked team.

Quarterfinals will be at the Fiesta Bowl at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 31; at the Peach Bowl at 1 p.m. Jan. 1; at the Rose Bowl at 5 p.m. Jan. 1; and at the Sugar Bowl at 8:45 p.m. Jan. 1.

The semifinals will be at the Orange Bowl at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 9; and at the Cotton Bowl at 7:30 p.m., Jan. 10. The national championship game will be at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 20 at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta.



Don Speck | The Lima News

Ohio State coach Ryan Day shows his displeasure with a call on the field during the first quarter of the Buckeyes' game at Notre Dame last season.



Don Speck | The Lima News

Ohio State defensive end JT Tuimoloau closes in on Western Kentucky quarterback Austin Reed during a game at Ohio Stadium last season.



Don Speck | The Lima News

Ohio State cornerback Denzel Burke (10) makes an interception over Youngstown State's Bryce Oliver in a game at Ohio Stadium last season.

Five Ohio State players to watch

By Jim Naveau

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Some of them have established themselves as stars at Ohio State. Others arrived through the transfer portal. One hasn't played a college football game yet. But they all are players expected to do big things individually for OSU as it pursues a national championship. Here are five Buckeyes to watch:

Will Howard

One of the reasons Ohio State settled on Howard as its transfer portal target to replace Kyle McCord at quarterback was that he could run the ball and he liked to run the ball.

That is something that has been absent from OSU's offense for the last three seasons.

Justin Fields in 2020 is the last starting quarterback at Ohio State to run for a touchdown. He had five rushing TDs in 2020 and 10 of them in 2019. McCord did not have a rushing touchdown last season and Stroud's only career touchdown on the ground was during his freshman season in 2020 when he was Fields' backup.

Howard passed for 2,643 yards and 24 touchdowns last season at Kansas State and ran for 351 yards and nine touchdowns. The fifth-year senior had 48 touchdown passes in his four years at KSU and scored 19 rushing touchdowns.

"I want these guys on my team to know I'm will-

ing to run the ball and go get those extra yards when I need to," Howard said after a preseason training camp practice. "When it's third and five at the end of the game and everyone is covered

downfield am I going to be able to tuck the ball and go get six yards and run someone over?"

Howard weighed in at 249 pounds when he arrived at Ohio State in January but is between 230 and 235 pounds now. He says he notices a difference when he has to move around in the pocket on pass plays and when he runs straight ahead.

While he is a big part of Ohio State's pursuit of a national championship, Howard says he doesn't feel a lot of pressure.

"I don't feel like I have to be a hero. I have the guys around me that I just need to facilitate and get the ball to them. I don't have to do anything superhuman," he said.

Emeka Egbuka

Egbuka was among several NFL draft eligible players who chose to return to Ohio State.

He missed three games and was limited most of the season because of injuries last year when his production was cut nearly in half from what it was in 2022. He caught 41 passes for 515 yards and four



Smith

touchdowns last season after having 74 catches for 1,151 yards and 10 touchdowns and running for two more scores.

If he stays healthy it would not be surprising to see him lead Ohio State's talented group of

receivers in catches, yards and touchdowns.

"There's a lot that went into the decision," Egbuka said about his return to OSU. "Coming out of the last game against Missouri I was really 50-50 and I didn't know where I was going to go. I just stayed prayerful about everything and I leaned on my Lord to give me guidance and direction and I feel like he gave me the guidance to come back here for my senior year. It turns out a lot of my friends felt the same way and here we are with a very veteran senior team and we're looking to do something great."

Egbuka first got on the field as a freshman by averaging 29 yards per kickoff return in 2021 during a season when Ohio State struggled at times on kickoff and punt returns. He will still be involved in returning punts, coach Ryan Day said recently.

Quinshon Judkins

For now, Judkins' greatest contribution might be making Ohio State fans feel just a little bit better



Richard Parrish | The Lima News

Will Howard, a transfer from Kansas State, has taken over the starting quarterback's job at Ohio State from last year's starter, Kyle McCord, who transferred to Syracuse.



Richard Parrish | The Lima News

Ole Miss transfer Quinshon Judkins and TreVeyon Henderson could give Ohio State the best backfield in college football if they can stay healthy. Judkins was first-team All-SEC at Ole Miss last season before entering the transfer portal and landing at Ohio State.

Watch

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by announcing he was coming to Ohio State through the transfer portal a few minutes after Michigan won the national championship.

But the expectation is that the former Ole Miss running back will contribute much more once this season gets underway.

Judkins was one of the biggest pickups for the Buckeyes in the portal. He was the Southeastern Conference Freshman of the Year when he rushed for 1,567 yards and 16 touchdowns in 2022 and was first-team All-SEC when he gained 1,158 yards on the ground last season.

He ran for 100 yards or more in 14 of the 26 games he played at Ole Miss. His 545 carries are the most by a college running back in the last two seasons. He and Herschel Walker are the only SEC running backs to run for at least 15 touchdowns in both of their first two seasons.

If he and TreVeyon Henderson stay healthy Ohio State could have the best running back duo in the country. Henderson gained 1,248 yards as a freshman. He had 926 yards rushing last season even though he missed three games. He has missed eight of OSU's 26 games the last two seasons because of injuries.

Judkins took less than a week after entering the portal to commit to Ohio State, a team that did not offer him a scholarship when he was in high school.

He was a 3-star recruit coming out of high school but had offers from Notre Dame, Arkansas, Auburn, Florida, Florida State, Miami, Michigan, Mississippi State, Penn State and Tennessee.

Denzel Burke

Burke is among the most confident of the Buckeyes. Confident enough to say it out loud that after becoming a starter at cornerback from day one as a freshman, he

had a mostly forgettable injury-riddled sophomore season.

But he righted the ship as a junior and surprised many people by coming back for his senior season after being named first-team All-Big Ten and second-team All-American.

He called his sophomore season "the lowest point of my life as a football player." Suddenly, receivers were making more catches against him and scoring more touchdowns, including the game-winner for Georgia in a College Football Playoff semifinal game.

"But I've grown from that and that's something I'm always going to remember," Burke said.

"After my freshman year, I'm an 18-year-old kid. I've just started all 12 games and have gotten a little complacent. I felt like I was on top of the world. I kind of lost that edge a little bit going into my sophomore year. Then I got hurt (shoulder and hand) and had to deal with all those difficulties."

Cornerbacks coach Tim Walton says Burke is clearly the leader at that position for OSU. "We look to him for leadership. I give him challenges every day," he said. Burke calls Walton "a great addition to my life on and off the field."

Burke has started 35 games at cornerback. He has a chance to break William White's Ohio State record of 46 starts at that position.

"I want to be recognized as the best corner ever to come through here. I want to put my name on the wall, get a tree (in the Buckeye Grove) and win a national championship," he said.

Jeremiah Smith

Smith, the No. 1-ranked recruit nationally at any position when he signed with the Buckeyes, has been compared to legendary Ohio State receivers like Cris Carter and Marvin Harrison Jr. before he has ever played a college game.

Coach Ryan Day says Smith is an exceptionally talented football player but he is going to refrain from praising him too much until after he has played a game.



Don Speck | The Lima News

Ohio State football wide receiver Emeka Egbuka (2) stretches out and scores a touchdown over Michigan defensive back Ja'Den McBurrows during a game last year.



Don Speck | The Lima News

Ohio State cornerback Denzel Burke (10) defends against Michigan's Roman Wilson (1) during the Wolverines' 30-24 win over OSU last season.

Ohio State's defensive backs, who have competed with him closely in practice and workouts since he enrolled for the second semester in January, are less cautious with their opinions.

"He's like a different type of talent. I don't think I've ever seen anything like him because he's so tall and big (6-3, 215) and can run as well. He's got a good mix of everything," cornerback Jermaine Mathews said.

Burke said, "He has everything you want in a prototypical receiver. He's next up. I'm really excited for his ceiling these next couple years and what he's going to bring to the

table for our team this year. Marv is hands down the best receiver I ever played against. He has a little of Marv in him now so imagine what he's going to be like in his third year. It's going to be nuts."

Smith said, "I know there are big expectations for me coming in because I'm the No. 1 player in the country and all the hype around me. I just try to block out all that stuff and focus on the main thing — the team, our receiver room and the locker room.

"Off the field, I'm a quiet person. On the field, I'm a different type of person. I'm just a quiet person who is all about his business."

What will Kelly bring to OSU's offense?

By Jim Naveau

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After winning the transfer portal by convincing his next starting quarterback, three of Alabama's best players and one of the best running backs in college football to come to Ohio State, Ryan Day had one more surprise to reveal.

And that surprise might have been even more unexpected than adding Will Howard, Caleb Downs, Seth McLaughlin, Julian Sayin and Quinshon Judkins to the Buckeyes' roster.

As Day assessed what needed to change for the 2024 season after a third consecutive loss to Michigan and a ghastly performance against Missouri in the Cotton Bowl, one of the conclusions he came to was he needed to turn over some or all of the play calling duties to an offensive coordinator.

His first hire for that position, former Penn State and Houston Texans coach Bill O'Brien, left three weeks after the announcement he was joining Day's staff when he became the head coach at Boston College.

But what initially looked like a negative became a positive with the surprising news that UCLA head coach Chip Kelly was leaving the Bruins to become Ohio State's offensive coordinator.

Kelly and Day have a relationship going back to when Day was a high school player with offers from Ivy League schools and Kelly was an assistant coach who recruited him to the University of New Hampshire.

Kelly earned a reputation as an offensive innovator and savant when in his first four years as a head coach at Oregon from 2009 to 2012 the Ducks won 46 of 53 games and



averaged nearly 50 points a game and more than 500 yards of total offense the last three of those four seasons.

He left Oregon after the 2012 season to become the head coach of the Philadelphia Eagles. He had a 26-21 record with the Eagles in three seasons, then went 2-14 in one season as the San Francisco 49ers coach. He was 35-34 in six seasons at UCLA in his return to college football.

Ohio State is paying him \$2 million to be its offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach.

So what kind of offense will Kelly be in charge of this season? What new ideas might he bring?

"It's funny. Some people think I'm an air raid guy, some people think I'm a wing-T guy, some people think I want to run the ball every down. We're going to do what's best for Ohio State and that's kind of what our game plan is now," Kelly said during his first press conference at OSU.

Day and Kelly have said quarterback runs will be a bigger part of Ohio State's offense this season. But that doesn't mean starter Will Howard and the other quarterbacks will turn into running backs.

"His ability to help us in the run game is going to be a really big plus for us this year because he's not a guy who is just going to hand it off," Kelly said about Howard. "There's not going to be a ton of quarterback runs where we're snapping the ball to him like he's Tim Tebow and just ramming him up in there. But there are certain packages we have for our quarterbacks to make sure we're keeping defenses honest."

Here's a look at how Oregon used its quarterbacks when Kelly was its head coach for four years and its offensive coordinator for two seasons:

- Dennis Dixon (2007). Passed for 2,184 yards and 20 touchdowns. Rushed for 589 yards and 9 touchdowns. Had 15 carries for 141 yards against Houston, 17 carries for 76 yards against USC, 16 carries for 76 yards against Michigan, 12 carries for 99 yards against Washington, and 11 carries for 57 yards against Arizona State.
- Jeremiah Masoli (2008). Passed for 1,744 yards and 13 touchdowns. Rushed for 718 yards and 10 touchdowns. In the last seven games of the season he averaged 15 carries for 92 yards rushing, including going for 170 yards on 24 carries against UCLA and 106 yards on 16 carries against Oklahoma State in the Holiday Bowl.
- Jeremiah Masoli (2009). Passed for 2,147 yards and 15 touchdowns. Rushed for 668 yards and 13



Kelly

touchdowns. He ran the ball 10 times or more in seven games, with the highest number of carries (16) coming against Arizona. He rushed for 84 yards on 14 carries against Purdue and 164 yards on 13 carries against USC.

- In Ohio State's 26-17 win over Oregon in the Rose Bowl, its defensive game plan was to take away Masoli's runs. He was held to 9 yards rushing on 6 carries and was 9 of 20 passing for 81 yards.
- Darron Thomas (2010). Passed for 2,881 yards and 30 touchdowns. Rushed for 486 yards and 5 touchdowns. He ran the ball 10 times or more in only three games. His top games for carries were 16, 15 and 12, and his most productive game on the ground was 117 yards against Stanford.
- Darron Thomas (2011). Passed for 2,761 yards and 33 touchdowns. Rushed for 206 yards on 56 carries and scored 3 touchdowns. He ran the ball only 34 times in the final seven games of the season after suffering a knee injury in the sixth game of the season.
- Marcus Mariota (2012). Passed for 2,677 yards and 32 touchdowns and set the standard for rushing yards by a Chip Kelly quarterback with 752 yards. He had 15 carries for 96 yards against USC, 14 carries for 67 yards against Fresno State, 12 carries for 89 yards against Oregon State, and 10 carries against Arizona State.

Four big challenges on OSU's schedule

By Jim Naveau

Here's my ranking of Ohio State's regular season games from easiest to most challenging.

This year OSU's schedule can be divided into three categories — the non-league games, five games against middle-of-the-pack Big Ten teams and four Big Ten games which will have a lot to say about whether this will be a great season where dreams are reached or not.

Here's how the Buckeyes' schedule looks before they've played a game:

12. Akron.

The Zips are 7-47 over the last five seasons. Ohio State by 35. By halftime.

11. Western Michigan.

The Broncos are a decent MAC team that can beat the teams it's supposed to beat. Ohio State is not on that list.

10. Marshall.

The three players competing for the starting quarterback job at Marshall combined for 11 touchdown passes and 19 interceptions last season. Ohio State cornerbacks like Denzel Burke, Davison Igbinosun and Jordan Hancock could feast on that.



Jim Naveau
The Lima News

9. at Michigan State.

Pro Football Focus gives Sparty a 1 percent chance to win the Big Ten. So, you're saying there's a chance? MSU might win five or six games but this isn't one of them.

8. Purdue.

What's the opposite of a destination school? After the 2022 season, Purdue coach Jeff Brohm left to become Louisville's coach. After last season possibly the best player on the Boilermaker's roster, defensive end Nick Scourtan, who led the Big Ten with 10 sacks, transferred to Texas A&M.

7. Indiana.

New coach Curt Cignetti brought in 15 transfer players, including 12 who played for him at James Madison. He's never had a losing season in 13 seasons as a head coach. He's probably never faced a task like winning at Indiana, though.

6. Northwestern.

Last year's surprise team in the Big Ten won't sneak up on anyone this season. They also probably won't beat the best teams on their schedule — Ohio State, Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa.

5. Nebraska.

The Cornhuskers are 2-17 in

OHIO STATE SCHEDULE

Aug. 31 Akron, 3:30 p.m.
Sept. 7 Western Michigan, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 14 Bye
Sept. 21 Marshall, TBA
Sept. 28 at Michigan State, TBA
Oct. 5 Iowa, TBA
Oct. 12 at Oregon, TBA
Oct. 19 Bye
Oct. 26 Nebraska, TBA
Nov. 2 at Penn State, TBA
Nov. 9 Purdue, TBA
Nov. 16 at Northwestern, TBA
Nov. 23 Indiana, TBA
Nov. 30 Michigan, Noon

games decided by a touchdown or less in the last three seasons. With 5-star freshman Dylan Raiola and four returning offensive linemen in front of him they might be the best of the mid-level Big Ten teams.

4. Iowa.

Laugh at the Hawkeyes' offense all you want and it might struggle again this season but they can play defense. They scored 15 points a game and found a way to win 10 games last season.

3. at Penn State.

Playing at Penn State might not be as intimidating as it once was but it's still tough. And the Nittany Lions are hungry for a win over a team like Ohio State to prove their ceiling is higher than 9-3.

2023 OSU STATISTICS

Passing Yards

Kyle McCord 3,170
 Devin Brown 217
 Lincoln Kienholz 111

Rushing Yards

TreVeyon Henderson 926
 Chip Trayanum 373

Receptions

Marvin Harrison Jr. 67
 Emeka Egbuka 41
 Cade Stover 41

Receiving Yards

Marvin Harrison Jr. 1,211
 Cade Stover 576
 Emeka Egbuka 541

Tackles

Steele Chambers 83
 Tommy Eichenberg 82

Interceptions

Jordan Hancock 2

Field Goals

Jayden Fielding 16/20

2. Michigan.

The Wolverines need a quarterback. If they find one by November this could be the toughest game on OSU's schedule because Michigan has several of its best defensive players back from last season.

1. at Oregon.

This is a match-up of the two biggest winners in the transfer portal in college football in the offseason. Both have national championship hopes. And there could be a rematch in the Big Ten championship game.



Don Speck | The Lima News
 Linebacker Cody Simon, shown here in a game against Minnesota last season, is one of Ohio State's captains this season.



Don Speck | The Lima News
 Ohio State cornerback Davison Igbinosun is part of one of the best defensive backfields in college football. He is shown leaning into a tackle of Maryland's Antwain Little last season.



Don Speck | The Lima News
 Ohio State defensive tackle Tyleik Williams (91) wraps up Minnesota running back Jordan Nubin during a game last season at Ohio Stadium.

2024 Big Ten football capsules

By Jim Naveau

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Illinois

Last year: 5-7 overall, 3-6 Big Ten
Coach: Bret Bielema (18-19 at Illinois, 115-77 overall)

Returning starters: 11 (5 offense, 5 defense, punter)

Players to watch: QB Luke Altmyer, OT J.C. Davis, WR Pat Bryant, RB Kaden Feagin, LB Seth Coleman, LB Gabe Jacas, CB Terrance Brooks, S Matthew Bailey

The big questions: Can quarterback Luke Altmyer, who passed for 1,878 yards in the nine games he played last season, improve his touchdown to interception ratio (13 TDs, 10 picks last season)? Who will replace three starters from last year on the defensive line, including Jer'Zhan Newton, a second-round selection of the Washington Commanders? Can Illinois avoid finishing in the lower half of the Big Ten in the first season of the conference's return to not having divisions?

Indiana

Last year: 3-9 overall, 1-8 Big Ten
Coach: Curt Cignetti (0-0 at Indiana, 119-35 overall)

Returning starters: 5 (3 offense, 1 defense, punter)

Players to watch: QB Kurtis Rourke, RB Kaelon Black, WR Donaven McCulley, WR Elijah Sarratt, DE Lanell Carr Jr., DE Jacob Mangum-Farrar

The big questions: Will the drastic roster makeover after Curt Cignetti was hired as the Hoosiers coach achieve his goal of making IU faster and more athletic or did it rely too much on players who might need some time to adjust to the Big Ten, like the 13 athletes he brought with him from James Madison University? Will former Ohio University quarterback Kurtis Rourke be this year's starter for Indiana? Can the

Hoosiers tighten up their defense, which has ranked No. 98, No. 97 and No. 109 nationally the last three seasons?

Iowa

Last year: 10-4 overall, 7-2 Big Ten

Coach: Kirk Ferentz (196-123 at Iowa, 218-144 overall)

Returning starters: 15 (6 offense, 8 defense, kicker)

Players to watch: QB Cade McNamara, RB Leshon Williams, TE Luke Lachey, WR Kaleb Brown, LB Jay Higgins, LB Nick Jackson, LB Sebastian Castro, S Xavier Nwankpa

The big questions: Will Iowa's offense be more productive under new coordinator Tim Lester, a former Western Michigan head coach, than it was last season when it averaged only 15.4 points a game in Brian Ferentz's final season as coordinator? Will quarterback Cade McNamara, whose backups are all inexperienced, be fully recovered from the ACL tear that ended his season after five games last year? Can the Hawkeyes' defense be even better than last season when it held its opponent to fewer than 17 points in 11 of its 14 games? Will tight end Luke Lachey be the next in a long line of Hawkeyes tight ends to be selected early in the NFL draft?

Minnesota

Last year: 6-7 overall, 3-6 Big Ten
Coach: P.J. Fleck (50-34 at Minnesota, 80-56 overall)

Returning starters: 14 (5 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter)

Players to watch: QB Max Brosmer, RB Darius Taylor, RB Sieh Bangura, WR Daniel Jackson, OT Aireontae Ersery, DE Jah Joyner, LB Cody Lindenberg, CB Justin Wallery, S Koi Perich.

The big questions: Will quarterback Max Brosmer, who threw for 3,464 yards and 29 touchdowns last

season at FCS New Hampshire, be an upgrade over Athan Kaliakmanis, who completed only 54 percent of his passes in 2023 for the Gophers before transferring to Rutgers? Can the Gophers develop some depth at receiver where second-team All-Big Ten wideout Daniel Jackson is the only proven threat? Will late September and early October tell the story of Minnesota's season when it faces Iowa, Michigan, USC and UCLA on consecutive Saturdays?

Maryland

Last year: 8-5 overall, 4-5 Big Ten
Coach: Mike Locksley (29-33 at Maryland, 31-59 overall)

Returning starters: 12 (5 offense, 6 defense, kicker)

Players to watch: QB M.J. Morris, RB Roman Hemby, WR Kaden Prather, WR Tai Felton, DL Jordan Phillips, DE Quashon Fuller, DE Donnell Brown, Ruben Hyppolite, S Dante Trader

The big questions: Who will be the starting quarterback now that Taulia Tagovailoa's career is over? Is the defensive front seven the Terapins' No. 1 strength? Can running back Roman Hemby return to the level he played at in 2022 when he rushed for 1,287 yards before dropping to 680 yards last season?

Michigan

Last year: 15-0 overall, 9-0 Big Ten, National Champion

Coach: Sherrone Moore (4-0 overall, 4-0 at Michigan)

Returning starters: 5 (1 offense, 3 defense, punter)

Players to watch: RB Donovan Edwards, WR Tyler Morris, TE Colston Loveland, DT Mason Graham, CB Will Johnson, S Rod Moore.

The big questions: Can Michigan contend for the Big Ten title even with massive departures from last year's team, including coach Jim Harbaugh? Who will start at quar-

terback? Are there NCAA penalties in the Wolverines' future for Connor Stalions' alleged undercover sign-stealing escapades?

Michigan State

Last year: 4-8 overall, 2-7 Big Ten
Coach: Jonathan Smith (0-0 at Michigan State, 34-35 overall)

Returning starters: 10 (3 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter)

Players to watch: QB Aidan Chiles, RB Nate Carter, TE Jack Velling, OT Brandon Baldwin, LB Cal Haladay, LB Jordan Hall

The big questions: Can new coach Jonathan Smith duplicate the way he built a winner at Oregon State at Michigan State, which has a lot of similarities to the way Marc Dantonio won Big Ten championships at MSU? Can quarterback Aidan Chiles, who played for Smith at Oregon State, energize an offense that ranked No. 128 nationally in scoring at 15.9 points a game, one spot ahead of Iowa, last season? Who, other than Montorie Foster (42 catches last season), will play wide receiver?

Nebraska

Last year: 5-7 overall, 3-6 Big Ten
Coach: Matt Rhule (5-7 at Nebraska and 52-50 overall)

Returning starters: 17 (7 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter)

Players to watch: QB Dylan Raiola, RB Emmett Johnson, OT Bryce Benhart, DT Ty Robinson, CB Tommi Hill

The big questions: Will 5-star freshman quarterback Dylan Raiola, who once verbally committed to Ohio State, become the starter and live up to the hype? With four returning starters on the offensive line and three on the defensive line, could Nebraska be one of the surprises in the Big Ten this season? Can the Cornhuskers find ways to

Big Ten

From page 8D

win close games, which was a problem last season when three of their losses were by three points?

Northwestern

Last year: 8-5 overall, 5-4 Big Ten

Coach: David Braun (8-5 all at Northwestern)

Returning starters: 12 (5 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter)

Players to watch: QB Mike Wright, RB Cam Porter, WR Bryce Kirtz, WR A.J. Henning, DL Najee Story, LB Xander Mueller, CB Theran Johnson

The big questions: Can Northwestern continue the unexpected success of last season when it won eight games after being predicted to win one or two in the preseason amidst the turmoil of longtime head coach Pat Fitzgerald being fired? Will transfer portal quarterback Mike Wright, formerly of Mississippi State, be the right person to lead the Wildcats' offense? How much will change about Northwestern's approach with a new offensive coordinator, a new defensive coordinator and two other new assistant coaches?

Ohio State

Last year: 11-2 overall, 8-1 Big Ten

Coach: Ryan Day (56-8 all at Ohio State)

Returning starters: 15 (6 offense, 8 defense, kicker)

Players to watch: QB Will Howard, RB Quinshon Judkins, RB TreVeyon Henderson, WR Emeka Egbuka, WR Jeremiah Smith, WR Carnell Tate, DE J.T. Tuimoloau, DE Jack Sawyer,

CB Denzel Burke, CB Davison Igbinosun, S Caleb Downs

The big questions: Can Ohio State end its three-game losing streak against Michigan? Can it go undefeated and win the national championship? Will the much-criticized offensive line be improved? Will Ryan Day settle on one quarterback or will more than one play? How much of a change might there be in OSU's offense with Chip Kelly taking over as offensive coordinator?

Penn State

Last year: 10-3 overall, 7-2 Big Ten

Coach: James Franklin (88-39 Big Ten, 112-50 overall)

Returning starters: 12 (5 offense, 6 defense, punter)

Players to watch: QB Drew Allar, RB Nick Singleton, RB Kaytron Allen, WR Julian Fleming, TE Tyler Warren, DE Abdul Carter, LB Kobe King, S Jaylen Reed, S K.J. Winson

The big questions: Will quarterback Drew Allar improve his accuracy (five games under 50 percent completion percentage last season) and get past a seeming aversion to throwing deep? Will former OSU receiver Julian Fleming or someone else emerge as a replacement for last year's No. 1 receiver KeAndre Lambert-Smith, who transferred to Auburn? Can coach James Franklin, who is 1-12 against Top 10 teams since 2016, knock off one of them this season and change that narrative?

Purdue

Last year: 4-8 overall, 3-6 Big Ten

Coach: Ryan Walters (4-8 Purdue, 4-8 overall)



Don Speck | The Lima News

Matchups between Big Ten teams and teams like USC, UCLA, Oregon, Washington used to happen very rarely and mostly in bowl games like the 2017 Cotton Bowl, where Nick Bosa is shown sacking USC's Sam Darnold in this Lima News file photo. Now USC, UCLA, Oregon and Washington are in the Big Ten and each of them will play nine Big Ten opponents this season.

Returning starters: 9 (4 offense, 5 defense)

Players to watch: QB Hudson Card, RB Devin Mockobee, WR T.J. Sheffield, TE Max Klare, WR Kam Brown, WR Tra'Mar Harris, DE Kydran Jenkins, /OLB Khordae Sydnor, S Cam Allen

The big questions: Will quarterback Hudson Card (15 touchdown passes, 8 interceptions) become more consistent in his second season at Purdue? Who will Card be throwing to after six receivers and the starting tight end last season entered the transfer portal? Will Devin Mockobee, who rushed for 807 yards last season, become the Boilermakers' first 1,000-yard rusher since 2008?

Rutgers

Last year: 7-6 overall, 3-6 Big Ten

Coach: Greg Schiano (87-95 overall and at Rut-

gers)

Returning starters: 14 (5 offense, 8 defense, kicker)

Players to watch: QB Athan Kaliakmanis, RB Kyle Monangai, WR Dymere Miller, WR Christian Dremel, OT Hollin Pierce, DE Aaron Lewis, LB Mohamed Toure, DB Desmond Igbinosun, DB Robert Longerbeam

The big questions: Will the addition of former Minnesota starting quarterback Athan Kaliakmanis to the starting lineup give Rutgers a dual-threat offense instead of the one-dimensional attack it had with Gavin Wimsatt in that position last season? Can running back Kyle Monangai have another season like last year when he gained 1,262 yards on the ground? Is this the best schedule Rutgers has had in years, with no games against former Big Ten East Division foes Ohio State and Michigan?

UCLA

Last year: 8-5 overall, 4-5 Pac-12

Coach: DeShaun Foster (0-0 at UCLA, 0-0 overall)

Returning starters: 10 (6 offense, 4 defense)

Players to watch: QB Ethan Garbers, RB T.J. Harden, WR J. Michael Sturdivant, WR Rico Flores Jr., TE Maliki Mataavao, DL Jay Tola, LB Kain Medrano

The big questions: Will the Bruins' offensive line, which allowed 42 sacks last season, show some improvement this season in its first year in the Big Ten? Will the defense go from a strength to a question mark with only four returning starters and defensive coordinator D'Anton Lynn leaving to become USC's coordinator? Can UCLA revive fan interest after several seasons of the Rose Bowl sometimes being half-empty for its home games?

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OSU coaches vs. Michigan



David F. Edwards 0-1-0
 John B. Eckstorm 0-1-1
 Perry Hale 0-2-0
 E.R. Sweatland 0-2-0
 Albert E. Herrnstein 0-4-0
 Howard Jones 0-0-1
 Henry Vaughn 0-1-0
 John R. Richards 0-1-0
 John W. Wilce 4-7-0
 Sam S. Willaman 2-3-0
 Francis A. Schmidt 4-3-0
 Paul E. Brown 1-1-1
 Carroll C. Widdoes 1-1-0
 Paul O. Bixler 0-1-0
 Wesley E. Fesler 0-3-1
 Woody Hayes 16-11-1
 Earle Bruce 5-4-0
 John Cooper 2-10-1
 Jim Tressel 9-1-0
 Luke Fickell 0-1-0
 Urban Meyer 7-0-0
 Ryan Day 1-3-0

Longest Ohio State winning streak: 8 games (2012-2019)
 Longest Michigan winning streak: 9 games (1901-1909)

Ohio State vs. Michigan 1897-2023

1897 Michigan 36-0
 1900 Tied 0-0
 1901 Michigan 21-0
 1902 Michigan 86-0
 1903 Michigan 36-0
 1904 Michigan 31-6
 1905 Michigan 40-0
 1906 Michigan 6-0
 1907 Michigan 22-0
 1908 Michigan 10-6
 1909 Michigan 33-6
 1910 Tied 3-3
 1911 Michigan 19-0
 1912 Michigan 14-0
 1918 Michigan 14-0
 1919 Ohio State 13-3
 1920 Ohio State 14-7
 1921 Ohio State 14-0
 1922 Michigan 19-0
 1923 Michigan 23-0
 1924 Michigan 16-6
 1925 Michigan 10-0
 1926 Michigan 17-16
 1927 Michigan 21-0

1928 Ohio State 19-7
 1929 Ohio State 7-0
 1930 Michigan 13-0
 1931 Ohio State 7-0
 1932 Michigan 14-10
 1933 Michigan 13-0
 1934 Ohio State 34-0
 1935 Ohio State 38-0
 1936 Ohio State 21-0
 1937 Ohio State 21-0
 1938 Michigan 18-0
 1939 Michigan 21-14
 1940 Michigan 40-0
 1941 Tied 20-20
 1942 Ohio State 21-7
 1943 Michigan 45-7
 1944 Ohio State 18-14
 1945 Michigan 7-3
 1946 Michigan 58-6
 1947 Michigan 21-0
 1948 Michigan 13-3
 1949 Tied 7-7
 1950 Michigan 9-3
 1951 Michigan 7-0

1952 Ohio State 27-7
 1953 Michigan 20-0
 1954 Ohio State 21-7
 1955 Ohio State 17-0
 1956 Michigan 19-0
 1957 Ohio State 31-14
 1958 Ohio State 20-14
 1959 Michigan 23-14
 1960 Ohio State 7-0
 1961 Ohio State 50-20
 1962 Ohio State 28-0
 1963 Ohio State 14-10
 1964 Michigan 10-0
 1965 Ohio State 9-7
 1966 Michigan 17-3
 1967 Ohio State 24-14
 1968 Ohio State 50-14
 1969 Michigan 24-12
 1970 Ohio State 20-9
 1971 Michigan 10-7
 1972 Ohio State 14-11
 1973 Tied 10-10
 1974 Ohio State 12-10
 1975 Ohio State 21-14

1976 Michigan 22-0
 1977 Michigan 14-6
 1978 Michigan 14-3
 1979 Ohio State 18-15
 1980 Michigan 9-3
 1981 Ohio State 14-9
 1982 Ohio State 24-14
 1983 Michigan 24-21
 1984 Ohio State 21-6
 1985 Michigan 27-17
 1986 Michigan 26-24
 1987 Ohio State 23-20
 1988 Michigan 34-31
 1989 Michigan 28-18
 1990 Michigan 16-13
 1991 Michigan 31-3
 1992 Tied 13-13
 1993 Michigan 28-0
 1994 Ohio State 22-6
 1995 Michigan 31-23
 1996 Michigan 13-9
 1997 Michigan 20-14
 1998 Ohio State 31-16
 1999 Michigan 24-17

2000 Michigan 38-26
 2001 Ohio State 26-20
 2002 Ohio State 14-9
 2003 Michigan 35-21
 2004 Ohio State 37-21
 2005 Ohio State 25-21
 2006 Ohio State 42-39
 2007 Ohio State 14-3
 2008 Ohio State 42-7
 2009 Ohio State 21-10
 2010 Ohio State 37-7
 2011 Michigan 40-34
 2012 Ohio State 26-21
 2013 Ohio State 42-41
 2014 Ohio State 42-28
 2015 Ohio State 42-13
 2016 Ohio State 30-27
 2017 Ohio State 31-20
 2018 Ohio State 62-39
 2019 Ohio State 56-27
 2021 Michigan 42-27
 2022 Michigan 45-23
 2023 Michigan 30-24

Big Ten

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USC

Last year: 8-5 overall, 5-4 Pac-12
 Coach: Lincoln Riley 19-8 at USC, 74-18 overall

Returning starters: 8 (3 offense, 3 defense, kicker, punter)

Players to watch: QB Miller Moss, QB Jayden Maiava, RB Woody Marks, WR Ja’Kobi Lane, WR Kyron Hudson, Duce Robinson, WR Zachariah Branch, WR Jay Fair, DE Jamil Muhammad, CB Jaylin Smith

The big questions: Could coach Lincoln Riley’s job be in jeopardy if new defensive coordinator D’Anton Lynn can’t fix the Trojans’ defense and they win fewer than 10 games? Does USC have the toughest schedule in the Big Ten with league games against Michigan, Wisconsin, Penn State and Washington and non-league matchups against LSU and Notre Dame? Will Miller Moss be the starting quarterback

after three seasons of backing up Caleb Williams or will Jaden Maiava, a transfer from UNLV, win the job?

Oregon

Last year: 12-2 overall, 8-1 Pac-12

Coach: Dan Lanning 22-5 at Oregon, 22-5 overall

Returning starters: 11 (6 offense, 4 defense, punter)

Players to watch: QB Dillon Gabriel, RB Jordan James, WR Tez Johnson, WR Evan Stewart, TE Terrance Ferguson, OL Ajani Cornelius, DE Jordan Burch, LB Jeffrey BassaEthan Garbers, RB T.J. Harden, WR J. Michael Sturdivant, WR Rico Flores Jr., TE Maliki Mataavao, DL Jay Tola, LB Kain Medrano, CB Jahlil Florence, P Ross James, K Atticus Sappington

The big questions: Will Oregon get into the College Football Playoff for the first time since 2014? Do Oregon’s transfer portal additions rank a close second to Ohio State in the Big Ten? Could inexperience

on the interior of the defensive line be the Ducks’ Achilles heel?

Washington

Last year: 14-1 overall, 9-0 Pac-12

Coach: Jedd Fisch (0-0 at Washington, 17-21 overall)

Returning starters: 4 (0 offense, 2 defense, kicker, punter)

Players to watch: QB Will Rogers, RB Jonah Coleman, WR Denzel Boston, WR Jeremiah Hunter, DL Sebastian Valdez, LB Alphonzo Tuputala, CB Elijah Jackson

The big questions: Is there a more inexperienced team in major college football than Washington with only two returning starting non-specialists from last year’s College Football Playoff runner-up? Can former Mississippi State quarterback Will Rogers, who is top 5 in SEC history in passing yards and touchdowns, match those stats in the Big Ten? Will Washington’s young players have grown up by the time the Huskies play Michigan, Iowa, USC, Penn State and

Oregon in five of their last seven games?

Wisconsin

Last year: 7-6 overall, 4-5 Big Ten
 Coach: Luke Fickell (7-6 at Wisconsin, 71-31 overall)

Returning starters: 12 (5 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter)

Players to watch: QB Tyler Van Dyke, RB Chez Mellusi, WR Will Pauling, OT Jack Nelson, DL James Thompson, S Hunter Wohler

The big questions: Will quarterback Tyler Van Dyke, a transfer from Miami, be the upgrade the Badgers need from Tanner Mordecai, who had only nine touchdown passes in 10 games last season? Who can replace running back Braelon Allen, who rushed for 984 yards last season before being drafted by the New York Jets? Does Wisconsin have the toughest schedule in the Big Ten? It avoids Ohio State and Michigan but plays Alabama, USC, Penn State, Iowa and Oregon.

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