

# History Of Ohio State Football



**Ohio State football** has a rich and storied history that reflects not only the evolution of the sport in the United States but also the cultural and social dynamics of the region. As one of the premier programs in college football, Ohio State University (OSU) has become synonymous with excellence, tradition, and a passionate fan base. This article delves into the history of Ohio State football, exploring its origins, key milestones, and how it has shaped the landscape of college athletics.

## Origins of Ohio State Football

The beginning of Ohio State football dates back to 1890 when the university fielded its first football team. Initially, the sport was played under somewhat informal rules, and the team was comprised mainly of students who had little experience with organized football.

### Early Years (1890-1900)

- 1890: The first game was played against Ohio Wesleyan University. The team lost 20-0.
- 1899: The first coach, John P. McCoy, was hired. This period saw the foundation of the football program being laid, despite limited success on the field.

The early years were marked by a lack of structure and consistency, with fluctuating team performance and a growing interest in the sport. This interest laid the groundwork for the future

development of Ohio State football.

## **Establishment of the Program**

As football gained popularity, Ohio State began to take the sport more seriously. The university joined the Ohio Athletic Conference in 1902, which provided a framework for competition and helped elevate the program's profile.

## **Transition to the Big Ten (1912)**

- In 1912, Ohio State became a founding member of the Big Ten Conference, one of the most prestigious conferences in college athletics. This membership would significantly enhance the program's competitiveness and visibility.

The 1920s and 1930s saw further development of the program. Notable figures emerged during this period, including coach John Wilce, who led the Buckeyes to their first conference championship in 1920.

## **Post-War Success and Rise to Prominence**

After World War II, Ohio State football experienced a renaissance. The 1940s and 1950s marked a period of significant achievements and established the Buckeyes as a national powerhouse.

## **Woody Hayes Era (1951-1978)**

One of the most significant figures in Ohio State football history is Woody Hayes, who served as head coach from 1951 to 1978. Under his leadership, the program achieved unprecedented success:

- National Championships: Hayes led the Buckeyes to five national championships (1954, 1957, 1968, 1970, and 1975).
- Rose Bowl Victories: Ohio State won multiple Rose Bowl titles, further solidifying its status in college football.

Hayes was known for his tough, no-nonsense coaching style and his emphasis on the running game. His intense rivalry with Michigan, known as "The Game," became one of college football's most storied rivalries, drawing national attention and setting the stage for future generations of players and fans.

## **Modern Era and Continued Success**

The departure of Woody Hayes in 1978 marked the beginning of a new era for Ohio State football. The

program continued to evolve, adapting to changes in the sport and maintaining its competitive edge.

## **Significant Coaches and Achievements**

- Earle Bruce (1979-1987): Bruce continued the tradition of excellence, leading the Buckeyes to a national championship game and multiple Big Ten titles.
- John Cooper (1988-1996): While Cooper had success in the regular season, he struggled against Michigan, leading to his eventual dismissal.
- Jim Tressel (2001-2010): Tressel revitalized the program, winning a national championship in 2002 and establishing a dominant run in the Big Ten.

During Tressel's tenure, Ohio State became a national contender once again, with consistent top-10 finishes and bowl game appearances.

## **Urban Meyer and National Dominance (2012-2018)**

Urban Meyer took over as head coach in 2012 and immediately made an impact:

- Undefeated Seasons: In his second year, Meyer led the Buckeyes to a perfect 14-0 season, culminating in a national championship in 2014.
- Recruiting Success: Meyer's ability to recruit elite talent helped Ohio State maintain its status as a top program.

Meyer's tenure solidified Ohio State's reputation as a national powerhouse and further intensified rivalries, particularly with Michigan.

## **Challenges and Resilience**

The Ohio State football program has also faced challenges, including controversies and changes in leadership. The scandal involving Jim Tressel, which led to his resignation in 2011, was a significant moment in the program's history. However, the university's ability to rebound from adversity has been notable.

## **Ryan Day Era (2019-Present)**

Ryan Day was named head coach in 2019 and has continued the tradition of excellence:

- Continued Success: Day has maintained a high level of performance, with multiple playoff appearances and Big Ten championships.
- Offensive Innovation: Under Day, the Buckeyes have embraced innovative offensive strategies, making them one of the most potent offenses in college football.

The ongoing rivalry with Michigan remains a focal point, with Day working to restore dominance in

that matchup.

## Ohio State Football Traditions

Ohio State football is known for its rich traditions, which contribute to the program's identity and fan engagement.

### Iconic Traditions

- Script Ohio: A pre-game routine performed by the Ohio State Marching Band, where band members spell out "Ohio" on the field.
- Buckeye Leaves: Players receive stickers on their helmets for outstanding performances, symbolizing achievement and teamwork.
- The Horseshoe: Ohio Stadium, affectionately known as "The Horseshoe," has been the home of the Buckeyes since its opening in 1922 and is known for its electrifying atmosphere.

## Impact on College Football and Community

Ohio State football has not only shaped the university's identity but also influenced the landscape of college athletics. The program has a large following and serves as a source of pride for the state of Ohio.

### Community Engagement

The Buckeyes are involved in numerous community outreach initiatives, emphasizing the importance of education, health, and wellness. The program's commitment to social responsibility reflects its role as a leader in college sports.

## Conclusion

The history of Ohio State football is a testament to the program's resilience, evolution, and dedication to excellence. From its humble beginnings to its status as a national powerhouse, Ohio State football has become an integral part of American sports culture. With a passionate fan base, strong traditions, and a commitment to success, the Buckeyes continue to inspire future generations of athletes and fans alike. As the program looks to the future, it will undoubtedly remain a pivotal player in the ever-evolving landscape of college football.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **When was the Ohio State football program founded?**

The Ohio State football program was founded in 1890.

### **Who was the first head coach of Ohio State football?**

The first head coach of Ohio State football was John D. Barry, who coached from 1890 to 1891.

### **What significant achievement did Ohio State accomplish in 1942?**

In 1942, Ohio State won its first national championship in football.

### **Which Ohio State coach is known for leading the team to a national championship in 1968?**

Woody Hayes is the coach known for leading Ohio State to a national championship in 1968.

### **What is the name of Ohio State's home stadium?**

Ohio State's home stadium is called Ohio Stadium, often referred to as 'The Horseshoe'.

### **How many national championships has Ohio State football won?**

As of now, Ohio State football has won eight national championships.

### **Who is Ohio State's all-time leading rusher?**

Eddie George is Ohio State's all-time leading rusher, with 3,768 yards.

### **What rivalry is considered the biggest for Ohio State football?**

The biggest rivalry for Ohio State football is against the University of Michigan, known as 'The Game'.

### **When did Ohio State first join the Big Ten Conference?**

Ohio State joined the Big Ten Conference in 1912.

### **What was a major scandal that affected Ohio State football in the early 2010s?**

The major scandal was the Tattoo Gate scandal in 2011, which led to the resignation of head coach Jim Tressel.

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