

# 2010 Big Ten football previews: Ohio State (premium)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

We've discussed [Minnesota](#), [Illinois](#), [Indiana](#), [Michigan](#), [Purdue](#), [Northwestern](#), [Michigan State](#), [Penn State](#), and [Wisconsin](#). Now our attention shifts to the defending Big Ten champion Ohio State Buckeyes, who comes into the season ranked No. 2 nationally. Iowa will play Ohio State at Kinnick Stadium on Nov. 20.

Many view Ohio State as the class of the Big Ten, and who could blame anyone for thinking this? Having won the conference outright or a share of it over each of the past five years, the Buckeyes are worthy of any accolades coming their way.

Ohio State was tabbed the preseason favorite once again to win the Big Ten earlier this month, and I can't disagree with the choice.

Basically, the Buckeyes have three "major" challenges on their schedule in 2010. The second game of the season features Miami (Fla.) coming to The Horseshoe. In conference, Ohio State has to play both Wisconsin and Iowa away from Columbus. I personally don't see the Buckeyes slipping up at home to the Hurricanes, so if they do lose any games this fall, my feeling is its one of those two road games.

As for the team itself, it's hard not to like what head coach Jim Tressel has assembled for this season, which starts on Sept. 2 against Marshall.

While he might not be one of the six captains the Buckeyes named for 2010 on Aug. 25, junior quarterback Terrelle Pryor is easily the most important piece to Ohio State's puzzle. Although he struggled at times in 2009, the 6-6 quarterback found a way to play through injury and guide the Buckeyes to a 26-17 win in the Rose Bowl over the Oregon Ducks, a game in which he was named MVP.

Pryor threw for 2,094 yards last season for Ohio State, completing 167-of-295 passes. He threw 18 touchdown passes and 11 interceptions, but considering the ratio was 10-to-9 after the Buckeyes' loss to Purdue, finishing the season with eight touchdown passes to just two picks in the final six games showed Pryor was making strides with his arm in addition to his feet.

He also rushed for 779 yards and seven touchdowns on 162 carries in 2009.

But Pryor's not alone in terms of what the Buckeyes possess offensively. Ohio State also returns a couple of running backs that both stepped up big late last season in senior Brandon Saine and junior Dan "Boom" Herron. As of Thursday, both were listed as co-starters on the Buckeyes' depth chart for their opener against Marshall.

Saine comes off a season where he rushed for 739 yards on 145 carries and had four touchdowns on the ground as well as two scores through the air. Meanwhile, Herron had 153 carries for Ohio State in 2009, rushing for 600 yards and seven touchdowns. The Buckeye duo had three rushing touchdowns combined against the Hawkeyes in a game Ohio State won 27-24 in overtime.

Helping block for both running backs (and Pryor for that matter) is an offensive line led by senior Justin Boren, who was selected first-team all-Big Ten in 2009 by the media, and senior Bryant Browning.

The Buckeyes have a couple of experienced receivers in junior DeVier Posey and senior Dane Sanzenbacher. Posey comes back after a 2009 campaign that saw him haul in 60 receptions for 828 yards and eight touchdowns, while Sanzenbacher had 36 catches for 570 yards and six touchdowns. Both are playmakers Pryor will look to get the football to when the Buckeyes do go to the air.

Defensively, each group features an impact player from 2009. The defensive line returns senior defensive end Cameron Heyward, who had 46 tackles and 6.5 sacks for Ohio State last season. Heyward had one game in particular against Penn State he dominated, recording a career-high 11 tackles and two sacks. He also returned a fumble recovery for a touchdown against Michigan in a 14-3 win over the Wolverines.

The linebacking corps will be led by seniors Ross Homan and Brian Rolle. Homan led the Buckeyes in tackles last season with 108, and tied outgoing safety Kurt Coleman with five interceptions. Rolle, meanwhile was second in tackles with 95 for Ohio State.

The secondary loses Coleman, but features three seniors who all gained plenty of playing time last season in senior safety Jermale Hines and senior cornerbacks Chimdi Chekwa and Devon Torrence. Chekwa is the only one of the three who started all 13 games for the Buckeyes in 2009 at corner.

Ohio State still has kicker Devin Barclay, who will be a senior in 2010. Barclay made the game-winning 39-yard field goal against Iowa last season that clinched the Big Ten and the trip to Pasadena.

Looking further at the schedule, games at home late in the season against Penn State and Michigan will be big, but both are very winnable. The Buckeyes will also have Oct. 23 circled. That day, Ohio State will seek revenge against Purdue, who gave the Buckeyes their only conference loss in

2009. There are also road trips to both Illinois and Minnesota on the 2010 slate.

But again, the two dates to circle are Oct. 16 and Nov. 20. The first date is when the Buckeyes travel to Camp Randall Stadium to play Wisconsin. The latter date is the rematch of last year's de facto Big Ten championship game against the Hawkeyes, which takes place at Kinnick Stadium.

In my opinion, Iowa and Wisconsin are the only two teams in the conference that actually have realistic shots at dethroning the Scarlet and Gray this year. If Ohio State manages to win both of these games in Madison and Iowa City, not only will it win six straight Big Ten titles, but I guarantee you the Buckeyes also play in Glendale on Jan. 10 in the BCS National Championship Game.

[Ohio State OL Bryant Browning](#)