

ohio state kickers history

Ohio State kickers history is a fascinating journey that reflects the evolution of college football, the changing dynamics of the game, and the vital role that special teams play in the success of a football program. The Ohio State Buckeyes, with their storied history and tradition, have seen a multitude of kickers come and go, each leaving their mark on the field. This article delves into the history of kickers at Ohio State, highlighting notable players, record-breaking performances, and the impact of special teams on the Buckeyes' success.

Early Days of Kickers at Ohio State

The role of kickers in college football was not always as recognized or celebrated as it is today. In the early years of the Ohio State football program, which began in 1890, the focus was primarily on running and passing plays. Kicking was often an afterthought, and many early players served dual roles as both position players and kickers.

The Birth of the Kicking Game

- 1890s-1920s: The evolution of the kicking game began slowly, with players like Orrville "Rabbit" Weller and William "Bill" H. Austin taking on kicking duties. Their contributions were essential, but the statistics and records from this era are scarce.
- 1930s: The introduction of more structured offensive and defensive strategies began to highlight the importance of kickers. As the game matured, so did the skills required for effective kicking.

Notable Ohio State Kickers Through the Years

As the years progressed, several kickers emerged as standout players for the Buckeyes. Their performances not only shaped the outcomes of games but also left a lasting legacy within the program.

Key Players and Their Achievements

1. Tom Skladany (1979-1982)

- Skladany is often regarded as one of the best punters and kickers in Ohio State history. He was known for his powerful leg and accuracy.
- Achievements:
 - First-team All-American in 1981.
 - Set a school record for the longest field goal at that time (52 yards).

2. Vince Workman (1983)

- Workman was a multi-talented player who contributed as a kicker and a running back.

- He made crucial kicks during pivotal games, helping Ohio State secure significant victories.

3. Mike Nugent (2001-2004)

- Nugent is one of the most celebrated kickers in Ohio State history. His accuracy and range set new standards for the program.
- Achievements:
 - First-team All-American in 2004.
 - Holds the school record for most career field goals (72).
 - Notable for his performance in the 2004 Fiesta Bowl, where he scored all 35 points against Kansas State.

4. Aaron Pettrey (2006-2009)

- Pettrey was a reliable kicker known for his clutch performances in critical moments.
- Achievements:
 - Key contributor to the Buckeyes' 2006 and 2007 seasons, including the BCS National Championship Game in 2007.

5. Drew Basil (2010-2013)

- Basil earned recognition for his accuracy and ability to perform under pressure.
- He is remembered for his performance against Michigan, where he made crucial kicks to secure victory.

6. Sean Nuernberger (2014-2017)

- Nuernberger showcased his talent during his time with the Buckeyes, contributing to multiple seasons of success.
- He was known for his consistency and strong leg, making him a dependable option in tight games.

Record-Breaking Performances

Throughout Ohio State's history, kickers have achieved numerous milestones that have added to their legacy. Here are some significant records worth noting:

- Most Field Goals in a Season: Mike Nugent holds the record for the most field goals made in a single season, with 27 in 2004.
- Longest Field Goal: The record for the longest field goal in Ohio State history is held by Drew Basil, who made a 57-yard field goal against Illinois in 2012.
- Consecutive Field Goals: Aaron Pettrey holds the record for the most consecutive field goals made in a single season, completing 18 straight attempts in 2008.

The Evolution of Kicking Techniques and Training

As the game of football has evolved, so has the art of kicking. The training methods, equipment, and techniques used by kickers at Ohio State have undergone significant changes over the years.

Advancements in Training

- **Specialized Coaching:** The introduction of specialized kicking coaches has transformed how kickers are trained. Today, kickers undergo extensive training programs that focus on technique, mental preparation, and physical conditioning.
- **Technology and Equipment:** The use of advanced training equipment, video analysis, and performance metrics has helped kickers refine their skills. This technology allows them to analyze their kicking form and make necessary adjustments.
- **Mental Toughness:** Modern kickers are now trained to handle the psychological pressures of the game. Mental conditioning techniques, including visualization and focus drills, play a crucial role in preparing kickers for high-stakes situations.

The Role of Kickers in Ohio State's Success

The success of the Ohio State Buckeyes cannot be attributed solely to the offense and defense. Special teams, particularly the kicking game, have played a pivotal role in determining the outcomes of many games.

Impact on Game Outcomes

- **Game-Winning Kicks:** Over the years, kickers have been called upon to make crucial field goals in tight games, often determining the outcome. For instance, Mike Nugent's game-winning kick against Michigan in 2004 is still celebrated by fans.
- **Field Position and Momentum:** Kickers contribute not only through field goals but also through kickoffs and punting. Effective kickers can significantly influence field position, setting the tone for the game.
- **Playoff and Championship Success:** Ohio State's ability to secure victories in crucial playoff games and national championship contests has often relied on the reliability of their kickers.

Conclusion

The Ohio State kickers history is a testament to the evolution of the kicking game in college football and the vital contributions of these athletes to the Buckeyes' success. From the early days of the program to the modern era, kickers have continually emerged to make their mark on the field. As the game continues to evolve, the legacy of Ohio State kickers will undoubtedly endure, inspiring future generations to excel in this critical aspect of the sport. Through their achievements, records, and memorable performances, these kickers have played an essential role in shaping the rich history of the Ohio State football program.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was the first kicker to gain national recognition at Ohio State?

The first kicker to gain national recognition at Ohio State was Tom Skladany, who played in the late 1970s and became known for his powerful leg and accuracy.

What notable record did Mike Nugent set during his time at Ohio State?

Mike Nugent set the Ohio State record for most career field goals made, finishing with 72 successful attempts from 2001 to 2004.

Which Ohio State kicker won the Lou Groza Award?

Mike Nugent won the Lou Groza Award in 2004, which is given annually to the nation's best placekicker.

Who is the all-time leading scorer among kickers at Ohio State?

As of October 2023, the all-time leading scorer among kickers at Ohio State is Mike Nugent, with 444 points.

Which Ohio State kicker had a successful NFL career after college?

Josh Huston, who was a kicker at Ohio State from 2003 to 2005, had a successful NFL career, playing for the New York Giants and the Kansas City Chiefs.

How has the role of the kicker evolved at Ohio State over the years?

The role of the kicker at Ohio State has evolved to become more specialized, with an increased focus on both field goals and kickoffs, emphasizing the importance of accuracy and distance.

What impact did the kicking game have on Ohio State's success in the 2002 national championship season?

The kicking game played a crucial role in Ohio State's 2002 national championship season, with key field goals made by Mike Nugent, helping secure tight victories.

Which recent Ohio State kicker has garnered attention for his performance in high-pressure situations?

Noah Ruggles gained attention for his performance in high-pressure situations during the 2021 season, including his game-winning kicks in close contests.

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