

Administration of Barack Obama, 2015

**Remarks Honoring the 2014 College Football Playoff National Champion
Ohio State University Buckeyes**

April 20, 2015

The President. O–H!

Audience members. I–O!

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Audience members. I–O!

The President. O–H!

Audience members. I–O! [*Laughter*]

The President. That last one was a little weak there. The—everybody, please have a seat. Welcome to the White House. And give it up for the 2014 college football National Champions, the Ohio State Buckeyes!

You may have noticed, we have a lot of Buckeye fans here today, including some Members of Congress. Representative Joyce Beatty was once a leader in the OSU community, and now she represents the OSU community here in Congress.

I want to thank the Ohio State University president, Michael Drake, who is here; Athletic Director Gene Smith; and of course, Coach Urban Meyer. So this is Ohio State Football's eighth National Championship. It's Coach Meyer's third time winning it, with his second team, which is pretty impressive. I've only done it twice. [*Laughter*] And for the same team both times. [*Laughter*]

This was an historic year in college football. The country got to enjoy its first-ever college football playoffs. And I will say it: It was about time. I cannot claim full credit—[*laughter*]—I will point out that I pushed for a playoff system in 2008. [*Laughter*] I'd say I threw my weight around. Political—PolitiFact, which keeps track of whether politicians keep their promises, this is a promise kept by me. [*Laughter*] So you're welcome, America. It was a great playoffs. [*Laughter*]

It was an exciting season from start to finish. And to say that Ohio State's path to the title felt improbable at times would be an understatement. At one point last year, the Buckeyes were ranked as low as 23d in the Nation. But they kept on battling back, with the help of not one, not two, but three quarterbacks. First, they lost Braxton Miller, a Heisman contender, before the season even started. Then, J.T. Barrett, Big Ten Quarterback of the Year, steps in, has an extraordinary run, but then breaks his ankle against a certain team up north—I guess I'm not allowed to—[*laughter*]. I'm not allowed to—[*applause*]. And then, we learned that Cardale Jones is not your average third-string quarterback. [*Laughter*] Anybody with a nickname like Twelve Gauge has to be taken seriously. [*Laughter*] I told him that I could throw a football 75 yards also, but he didn't believe me. [*Laughter*] So he's—he clearly is a smart kid. [*Laughter*]

But the Buckeyes hit their stride when it mattered most, pitched a 59–0 shutout in the Big Ten Championship, earning their way into the playoff spot, beat top-ranked Alabama in the

first round, then rolled up a decisive win against the Oregon Ducks for the eighth National Championship.

At critical moments throughout the season, we learned about the character of this football team. And we met the characters who made up the football team along the way. Like Joey Bosa, Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year. Joey—where's Joey? Right there. A consensus All-American, led the conference in sacks in 2014, including the one that ended the double-overtime game against Penn State. Followed each one with his signature celebration: a shrug. *[Laughter]* Just saying, I use that move sometimes. *[Laughter]* Now, Joey's hair may be short now—and he looks good. I actually like it shorter.

Defensive lineman Joey Bosa. I look good for you.

The President. See, I appreciate that. *[Laughter]* But he assures us that the shrug would be back next year. *[Laughter]*

Wide receiver Evan Spencer was named team MVP in 2014 for his selfless play, great blocking and even a perfectly thrown touchdown pass to Michael Thomas in the Sugar Bowl. Evan, go ahead and wave. And in addition to rushing for over 1,800 yards behind an extraordinary offensive line—as good as we've seen in a very long time—and earning the championship game MVP, Ezekiel Elliott made the NCAA fashion police take a close look at their midriff policies. *[Laughter]* Where's Zeke? Thanks for tucking in your shirt today. We appreciate that. *[Laughter]*

Running back Ezekiel Elliott. You need to get that rule changed.

He said I needed to get the rule changed. Did you see that? *[Laughter]* Look, I already got the playoff, all right? *[Laughter]* I've got other stuff to do now. *[Laughter]*

But in all seriousness, this was a team of true character, of true resilience. As I said to them when I had a chance to shake the hands of all the players, everybody is going to go through ups and downs in life, and how folks handle it, how the quarterbacks on this team supported each other, that's what every organization wants to see—is people stepping up for each other. And not only did they do it on the field; they made Ohio proud off the field. Each year, the Buckeyes pay forward their good fortune with more than a thousand hours of community service and charitable efforts in Central Ohio: visiting young patients in hospitals, helping second graders improve their reading, building playgrounds, supporting the Special Olympics, stocking shelves for the Mid-Ohio Foodbank.

So the love between this team and their community is mutual. I will say when you get a hundred thousand fans to show up to a practice—*[laughter]*—I think it's fair to say that your fans are a little crazy. *[Laughter]* But obviously it's working for them and it's working for this extraordinary team.

So, Coach Meyer, congratulations to you and the Ohio State University for your National Championship. Good luck this season coming up.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:52 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Michael Thomas, wide receiver, Ohio State University football team.

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