

The Eighth Wonder of the World: Ohio State University's Rejection of a Rose Bowl Bid in 1961

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A most unlikely faculty decision took place on the Ohio State University campus in the fall of 1961. The faculty senate voted to reject an invitation for Ohio State's football team to participate in the Rose Bowl on January 1, 1962. This historic action took place because the faculty believed the tail (football) was wagging the dog (academics). This decision was prompted by evidence of infractions by OSU of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) regulations and questionable behavior by football coach Woody Hayes. This adverse publicity portrayed Ohio's major university as a "football factory." Two protagonists met on the battle field, namely Hayes and Jack Fullen, longtime secretary of the Ohio State University Alumni Association. Fullen had been a critic of the overemphasis of football on the OSU campus. It was David versus Goliath. Amidst anger from alumni, Fullen remained in office fighting a losing battle until his retirement in 1967. Hayes retained his popularity on campus by producing winning teams. The action taken by the OSU faculty was truly the "eighth wonder of the world." One cannot imagine the OSU faculty attempting to reform king football again.

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IN AN ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN 1948, *LIFE* MAGAZINE PROCLAIMED Columbus, Ohio, as the football capital of America. It is not uncommon to find respectable, well-dressed patrons in a downtown bar discussing the fortunes of their beloved Buckeyes. One customer suddenly blurts out the words, "And then that damn Shakespeare!" This discussion has nothing to do with Elizabethan literature but rather concerns about a football game Ohio State lost to Notre Dame in 1935. Although the Shakespeare mentioned did indeed have the name of William, in reality he was an All-American halfback for Notre Dame, who threw a game-winning pass in the last few seconds of play to defeat the Buckeyes. These men were simply a few "downtown coaches" doing a little second guessing. "Everybody in Columbus has two jobs," a cynic once remarked, "his own and coaching the Ohio State football team."¹

The Rose Bowl has a venerable history dating back to 1902, when Michigan walloped Stanford 49-0 in the first Rose Bowl game. The contest was a great success and netted nearly \$4,000. The following year the big Eastern and Midwestern colleges were unwilling to send a team to the West Coast. The Rose Bowl was discontinued for twelve years until the "big game" returned in 1916.² Thereafter, the Rose Bowl developed into one of the nation's premier sporting events.

In the fall of 1961, the scent of roses drifted eastward from Pasadena to Columbus, home of the then ninth largest state university in the country, and to the Buckeyes, one of the nation's top-ranked football teams. After an opening game tie, the OSU team, coached by the volatile Wayne "Woody" Hayes, bowled over all of their opponents, including University of California at Los Angeles, the eventual opponent for the 1962 Rose Bowl game. Only hated Michigan remained to be played. On November 25, OSU clobbered the Wolverines 50-20. Back in Columbus the citizenry came down with rose fever. The following day, OSU athletic director Richard Larkins received a call from Tom Hamilton, commissioner of the Athletic Association of Western Universities (forerunner of the Pac-Ten). Would OSU play UCLA in the Rose Bowl game? Ohio State was given three days to respond.³

As this scenario unfolded, it is important to identify several key players: the well-known Novice G. Fawcett, newly appointed president of the university, whom the faculty and student body seemed to like; Woody Hayes, now in his eleventh year as head coach, who had established himself as a winning coach after several tumultuous years; alumni secretary, Jack Fullen, who was volatile and outspoken much like Hayes and a major nemesis to big-time college football; the Wolfe brothers, influential publishers of the *Columbus Dispatch*, the most powerful newspaper in Columbus; and the fifty-seven-member faculty council, of whom Professor Bruce Bennett, one of the pioneers of the North American Society of Sport History (NASSH), was a member. On the periphery were students, including the football team, the OSU Board of Trustees, alumni, and frenzied Buckeye fans. Without a doubt, the most important body in this situation was the faculty council.

Within faculty circles, the question of whether Ohio State should participate in the Rose Bowl had been festering for several years. Faculty members questioned the commercial aspects of big-time football. They were concerned that OSU football overshadowed the university's reputation as a center of learning.⁴ To many, the Rose Bowl contributed to an overemphasis in athletics. Ohio State utilized the quarter system, making it difficult

for Rose Bowl-bound students to attend classes by January 2. The Buckeyes had gone to the Rose Bowl in 1948, 1955, and 1958. In 1958 the Pacific Coast Conference had dissolved, and five members now formed a new organization, the aforementioned Athletic Association of Western Universities.⁵

Concurrently, Woody Hayes was riding high with winning teams. His baptism in the early fifties had been rocky with mediocre teams and planes flying over Ohio Stadium, reverently known as the "Shoe," pulling banners which read "Goodbye, Woody." By 1955, with an undefeated season, a victory over Michigan, and the defeat of USC in the Rose Bowl, the banners now read, "We love you, Woody."⁶ The faculty was not so happy. Under the parsimonious leadership of Governor Frank J. Lausche, Ohio had become one of the stingiest financiers of higher education in the country. Faculty members were leaving, graduate programs lost credibility, and the cry went out that there was money for football players but not for scholars.

The last straw for the faculty occurred in 1955 when a land mine nearly destroyed the Hayes juggernaut. In an interview with *Sports Illustrated*, Hayes divulged that he gave extra money to players in need. This infraction of NCAA rules brought an outcry from the usually docile faculty council. An investigation by Big Ten Commissioner Kenneth L. "Tug" Wilson resulted in OSU being placed on probation for at least a year and barred the football team from playing in the Rose Bowl. The NCAA followed with a ban on all Buckeye athletic teams from postseason competition.⁷

Enter one John "Jack" Fullen, longtime secretary of the OSU Alumni Association. The powerful and outspoken alumni director had been supportive of Hayes during his lean years. Now they became bitter enemies. Fullen, who demonstrated intense loyalty to the scarlet and gray, was livid that his alma mater was receiving so much bad publicity because of the overemphasis on football. The alumni director, who had both friends and enemies, continuously chastised Hayes and the football program. He emerged as a lonely figure in Columbus with his slogan, "The football tail is wagging the college dog."⁸

The tractable faculty finally decided to take matters into their own hands. In 1955, the council set up a seven-person committee to investigate, study, and make recommendations to the faculty council concerning the conduct of intercollegiate athletics at OSU. While this report was being completed, two important events took place. First, the Big Ten Conference, in the face of increasing abuses of the "jobs for athletes" at OSU and other member institutions, adopted the principle of outright grant-in-aid to athletes, based on a uniform formula for determining financial need. Secondly, President Fawcett immediately took steps to guard against a repetition of abuses in violation of conference and NCAA regulations.⁹ A man of integrity, Fawcett walked the tightrope necessary to appease the public over such a controversial issue as intercollegiate athletics.

The faculty council proposals, highlighted in what was known as the Fullington Report, initially made a major impact upon the campus population, extending to downtown Columbus, other Big Ten schools, and Western Athletic Conference headquarters in Chicago, and among OSU alumni chapters throughout the country. The principal recommendations adopted by the faculty council and approved by the board of trustees formed the basis for intercollegiate athletic policy at Ohio State. The major significance of the Fullington Report took the control of athletics at OSU from the administration and placed

it back with the faculty.¹⁰ The impact of this policy, released in November of 1957, was not immediately apparent. The Buckeyes were in the process of clinching the Big Ten championship. The team was invited to play University of Oregon in the 1958 Rose Bowl, and Ohio State University accepted the invitation. OSU's net proceeds from this game totaled \$15,522.

However, the fall of 1961 was a different story. During the four years since the Fullington Report was adopted, the faculty council had deliberated on several key issues affecting the athletic program. Most previous decisions were overshadowed by a faculty council meeting held on the afternoon of November 28, 1961. Ohio State had again won the Big Ten championship and was tendered an invitation to play UCLA, a team they had already defeated in regular season play, in the 1962 Rose Bowl. The athletic council, led by the honorable athletic director Richard Larkins, forwarded to the faculty council a motion, passed by a six-to-four vote, to accept the invitation to participate in the forthcoming Rose Bowl game.¹¹

When the faculty council gathered in the lounge of the faculty club to begin their deliberations, they were totally unprepared for the scene that ensued. The lounge was packed with faculty members, students, reporters, and news photographers. A battery of television cameras and a representative of a local radio station were in the back of the room.

It should be noted that the faculty council was representative in the true sense of the word. Thirteen members represented the administration *ex-officio*. The remaining forty-four members were duly elected from numerous campus academic units.¹² The main arguments in favor of participation in the Rose Bowl are familiar: nothing wrong with having a winning football team; participation in the Bowl game would enhance the reputation of the university in the eyes of those who support it; safeguards against commercialism were in place; and athletics did not overshadow the academic mission of the university. Those opposed to the trip to California were uneasy about the public image OSU portrayed as an "athletic factory"; academic disruptions were prominent in the 1958 Rose Bowl excursion; there was concern that Buckeye boosters were really in control of athletic policy; and favoritism toward football players would occur.

After due discussion, President Fawcett called for the vote. There were fifty-three votes cast, with twenty-five yes-votes and twenty-eight no-votes. Ohio State became the first Big Ten School to refuse a Rose Bowl bid. Minnesota eagerly accepted the bid to become the initial Big Ten team to play in two consecutive Rose Bowl games. Previous contracts had prohibited repeat performances.¹³

All forms of exclamatory behavior broke out over this rejection. Pressure was put upon the conservative University Board of Trustees to reverse the faculty council decision. President Fawcett called members of the board. The consensus of the board members determined that they lacked power to act on this matter without jeopardizing the university's membership in the Big Ten Conference. John W. Bricker, former U.S. senator and chairman of the board, spoke out in opposition to the faculty council decision.¹⁴ Dr. Les Horvath, a former OSU Heisman Trophy winner, was quoted as saying, "The Ohio State faculty are a bunch of jerks."¹⁵

Students were outraged and marched to the state capitol, damaging several vehicles on the way. The faculty council, President Fawcett and Jack Fullen were hung in effigy.

After two days of demonstrating, football co-captain Mike Ingram angrily addressed the students: "The team did all the damn work," he yelled through a microphone. "If the [team] can accept the decision, you certainly can. Now go home."¹⁶ The demonstration ended. The "big bad" Wolfe brothers went into a harangue of yellow journalism. The names and addresses of faculty members who voted "no" or who were thought to have voted "no" were published in the paper. Subsequently, the *Dispatch* published where selected faculty members had traveled to professional meetings and the financial amount allotted for their trips. An editorial exhorted, "The disappointment [of accepting a Bowl bid] comes as a finale to one of the finest football seasons . . . in Columbus . . . which has fostered football as one of the finest traditions of academic life and nurtured the facilities which made it possible. Will Ohio State be any better off as a result? Only in the minds of a few narrow, overly sensitive minds, perhaps."¹⁷ Fullen responded, "More scholarships for journalism students would produce editorial writers who were less gullible."¹⁸

As an aside, Bennett, who voted "no" cautioned against hypocrisy. He reminded the faculty that in the previous year the faculty council had voted to accept a \$15,000 share of the Rose Bowl receipts, an action he was not proud of and he thought was wrong. He also commented that the University of Missouri, with a fine team, had also rejected a bowl bid.¹⁹

What about the two major adversaries, Woody Hayes and Jack Fullen? The conflict was now out in the open. It was Goliath versus David. Initially Hayes greeted the news with a disappointed but restrained comment that football was not important enough to cause a schism on campus.²⁰ Hayes later pressed the attack, "I'm going to learn why . . . [Fullen] representing the university has so much power."²¹

Fullen was on the defensive and put up a good fight. He commented on one good result from this issue:

Because of the violence and intensity of the reaction [in Columbus] local writers proudly labeled the Rose Bowl controversy as the biggest story emanating from [the city] in 1961. Story is right. It reads like fiction and as far as real issues were presented, it was. . . . Many more thousands of thoughtful persons are taking another look at the imbalance in . . . Big Time institutions of Higher Learning and Entertainment. Therein lies higher education's hope. "Know ye the Truth and the Truth shall make ye free" never had a more significant ring than in this deplorable situation.²²

Continual barbs were exchanged between Fullen and Hayes, two proud individuals. Fullen was steadily losing ground in his quest for a semblance of sanity in the athletic department. Blocking the 1962 Rose Bowl bid had been an attempt to reassert academic priorities at OSU. That the faculty's action succeeded for so brief a time dramatically pointed out where the real power of the university resided.

In the spring of 1962, Jack Cole, a wealthy Dayton businessman, formed the Committee for the Advancement of OSU. Advancement was defined as "to get rid of Fullen." Four new positions were open on the alumni's board of directors. Cole's committee candidates won all four seats, further diminishing Fullen's strength. This panzer-like movement became complete in the fall of 1962. Newly-elected faculty council members, with inside support from the athletic department, voted 36-20 to accept the next Rose Bowl bid when invited. The revolt against the football machine was over. The anti-football faction of the faculty was again entombed; its partisans subdued.²³

Fullen continued to roar, but few people listened. He hung onto his position until his retirement in 1967. A beaten man, Fullen reminisced, “We lost the Rose Bowl battle and we lost the war to scale down the program. . . . The big loser is [the] Ohio State University . . . the sideshow is still the main attraction and the stuff under the tent is of secondary importance.”²⁴

The rejection of Ohio State’s participation in the 1962 Rose Bowl is truly the “Eighth Wonder of the World.” It is nearly inconceivable to envision such an occurrence ever taking place on the Ohio State University campus again. In 1961, not counting the Buckeyes, Columbus was home to one professional franchise, a Triple A baseball team. In 2007 Columbus supports three major professional sport franchises. This increase in number of professional teams in Columbus has had little impact, financial or otherwise, upon the athletic program at Ohio State. The Buckeyes are the number one show in Columbus. The frenzy and insanity associated with collegiate football, and especially at Ohio State, has intensified over the last forty-five years. One needs only to have been an observer at the national championship game in Tempe, Arizona, in 2003 to substantiate this conclusion.

Television and the attendant financial rewards have been an important factor in this increased display of football frenzy. Enlarged stadiums are filled to capacity. Additional numbers of alumni have strengthened loyalty to institutions with a renowned football history. New and additional bowl games have increased the pot of gold. Select and powerful programs struggle mightily to reach the pinnacle of success in collegiate football, the Bowl Championship Series. The naysayers and reputable critics have been shunted to the sidelines where they converse in hushed voices.

Unless one has been present on The Ohio State University campus for a lengthy period of time, it is difficult to convey to outsiders the intense partisanship and indescribable behavior which takes place in Columbus and at OSU each football season. The same may be said for other institutions, particularly in Division I, that have cherished a long-standing football tradition.

The faculty council displayed courage regarding this volatile issue. However, the faculty’s action turned out to be an aberration. King football had destroyed the “Eighth Wonder of the World.”



¹Joel Sayre, “Frenzied Football,” *Life*, 1 November 1948, p. 109.

²John Scanlon, “The Scent of Roses,” *Saturday Review*, 21 April 1962, p. 56.

³*Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁴OSU Faculty Council Minutes, 1961-1962, pp. 29-31, Secretary’s copy, The Ohio State University Archives, Columbus, Ohio (hereafter OSU Archives); Robert Vare, *Buckeye* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 115-116.

⁵Francis P. Weisenberger, *History of The Ohio State University, The Fawcett Years, 1956-1972*, Vol. 9 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975), 212.

⁶Vare, *Buckeye*, 108; Mervin D. Hyman and Gordon S. White, Jr., *Big Ten Football* (New York: MacMillan, 1977), 145-159.

⁷*Ibid.*, 108-110.

⁸*Ibid.*, 112.

⁹Scanlon, "The Scent of Roses," 74.

¹⁰Ibid.; letter from Richard Armitage, Secretary, OSU Faculty Council to Professor Samuel Hays, University of Iowa, 5 February 1960; letter from Professor Samuel Hayes to Richard Armitage, 8 February 1960; letter from Richard Armitage to Samuel Hays, 25 February 1960, all OSU Archives.

¹¹Report from the OSU Athletic Council to the OSU Faculty Council, 28 November 1961, OSU Archives.

¹²Scanlon, "The Scent of Roses," 76; memorandum from President Novice G. Fawcett entitled, "The Current Rose Bowl Controversy," 30 November 1961, OSU Archives.

¹³Scanlon, "Scent of Roses," 76; *Columbus Dispatch*, 29 November 1961, sec. A, p. 2; Marvin D. Hyman and Gordon S. White, Jr., *Big Ten Football* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 19.

¹⁴Statement issued by President Fawcett (Relative to Participation in the Rose Bowl Game on 1 January 1962) released 29 November 1961, OSU Archives; excerpt from the Handbook of the Intercollegiate Conference of Faculty Representatives (Western Conference), OSU Archives.

¹⁵*Columbus Dispatch*, 30 November 1961, sec. A, pp. 1, 2, 10.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷*Columbus Dispatch*, 29 November 1961, sec. A, pp. 1, 3, sec. B, p. 1.

¹⁸Vare, *Buckeye*, 118.

¹⁹OSU Faculty Council Minutes, 1961-1962, pp. 33-44.

²⁰Frank J. Tate, "The Football Furore," *Monthly* (Ohio State University) 53 (1962): 25.

²¹Ibid.; Jon Saraceno, "Hayes Still Haunted by Past Mistake," *USA Today*, 14 September 1984, sec. C, pp. 1, 2.

²²Jack Fullen, "Beneath the Bowl, Some Facts You Must Know," *Monthly* (Ohio State University) 53 (1962): 47.

²³Vare, *Buckeye*, 122.

²⁴Ibid.