



1968; The Year that Saved Ohio State Football

David Hyde

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1968 begins in the mens' room of an exclusive Columbus restaurant and ends two years later in The Rose Bowl, an unwitting but flawless metaphor for Ohio State University's rise to the pinnacle of college football. Between these two events occurs one of the great adventure stories in the history of the sport.

Against a backdrop of national turmoil and international crises, Coach Wayne Woodrow Hayes uncharacteristically brings into his lagging program new young coaches and an impressive bunch of extraordinary kids, including the first significant number of African-Americans.

There is an irreverent military school lineman who begins the school's lifting program by bringing his own weights, a Brooklyn fullback who can't believe Ohio's open spaces, a running back with New Jersey street-gang cred, and a homegrown quarterback with a bad back and an unassailable talent.

All of them labor under the shadow of Hayes, the promethean figure who would leave an indelible legacy as one of the century's great coaches- sly, mercurial, pugnacious, maddeningly contradictory, a larger-than-life figure who carries the football ambitions of an entire state on his beefy shoulders.

1968 is a rich tapestry of scenes and stories throughout an incandescent season, including some of the best football dialogue ever written. In scene after scene, the raw intensity of an unforgettable season pulls the reader along to its breathless climax in Pasadena when the Super Sophs take on one of college's greatest running backs.

It s a story that has everything- great drama, achievement, colorful characters, and the complex unfolding of Woody Hayes's multifaceted personality.

Near the end of a chaotic decade, the Buckeyes provide a badly needed feel-good lift to an entire state. And just as Woody predicted, they found themselves a large, inextricably bound family, tied forever by the commonalities of blood literally theirs sweat, tears, laughter, and, of course, their near-miraculous season.

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