

Big Ten Football Media Days

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Ohio State Buckeyes

Ryan Day

Press Conference



RYAN DAY: Great to be here. Very excited to do Big Ten Media Day here at Lucas Oil. Love Indianapolis. And we have three players here today. Very excited to have these guys here. Thayer Munford who is getting his degree this summer, came back, had an opportunity to go to the NFL, came back. It's meant a lot to us. He's done great job in the off-season, had a great career already at Ohio State and came back to leave a legacy behind. So excited that he's here.

Zach Harrison is here as well. Zach's had an unbelievable off-season, psychology major, and about to have a great season for us.

And Jeremy Ruckert is here in place of Chris Olave. Chris is getting his second vaccine shot here this weekend and so we decided to have him stay back in Columbus. But Jeremy is here in his place, he's also getting his degree this summer. And Jeremy decided to come back as well, had an opportunity to go into the NFL draft, and did some great things for us last year, had some big catches for us and excited to see what he does for us this season.

We're really excited to get back to normal here. Spring was very, very important for our team. We have counted 45 guys on our team that are in their first or second year and they missed over a thousand snaps last year, they missed six games and didn't have a spring practice the year before. So because of that, fundamentals is something that we spent a long, long time working on this spring and really heavy emphasis.

Then as we headed into the summer it's been an unbelievable opportunity for our team to really work on the leadership and the development of our team physically, but also in accountability. That's where Mick Marotti and his staff do a great job and really for the players to get away and find their own voice and find their own chemistry has been really good this summer.

But as we head into pre-season camp, this is something that is going to be very, very important for us, because we start right away. And I think the easy thing to do is, coming

off of last year, is to focus on what would happen in the game at the end of the year, how do we get back to the National Championship game, but more importantly this year it's going to be how do we win that first game at Minnesota with a young team, we're going to have a young quarterback, and we have to start the season really strong.

So this pre-season's going to be very, very important to us. We have to really come out of the gates strong and harden ourselves as we head into the first game.

So looking forward to that and it's going to be a long way all the way to the end of the season. So we get started here in a couple weeks and with that I'll take any questions.

Q. You're no stranger to this stadium and as you know the College Football Playoff Championship game is here. I know you're looking one day at a time and not at January, but what do you have to do, how does your team have to develop to get to this point and how good do you feel about your team right now?

RYAN DAY: Yeah, I feel good about the team, I feel good that we have some veteran groups, but I think that there's also some inexperience in some areas. And so it sounds like coach talk, but in order to get back here, which has been tremendous for us to get here, is we have to figure out a way to win the first game. Otherwise it doesn't matter.

How is that going to happen? It happens with an unbelievable pre-season and staying in the moment. That's been our mantra there at Ohio State for a long time is to stay in the moment, not get too worried about what happened yesterday, not get too far out in front of you in terms of worrying about playing in championship games. You got to do a great job of maximizing the day. If we can just stay on that focus we're going to have a chance to play in some championship games.

But, yeah, I mean, when you look at the youth that we have at linebacker, you look at our youth at quarterback, that's something that we got to make sure we're doing a great job of addressing. But we also have really good players around them. We have really good depth on defense in



the D-line, our secondary has more depth now than it's had in a while and then on offense I feel look we have pretty good depth at all the other positions.

Q. How do you guys on defense with such a young squad plan on trying to stop Minnesota's experienced run game in the first week with five Gopher offensive linemen are returning and a great running back in MO Ibrahim?

RYAN DAY: I think when you look at Minnesota, they have one of the first most experienced and veteran teams there is in the country. So it's going to be a major challenge for us going on the road, we haven't played in front of fans in a long time, so it's, it is a huge challenge.

The good news is we're not that young up front. We do have really good depth in the D-line. A lot of guys coming back, Haskell Garrett, Zach Harrison, Tyreke Smith, Antwan Jackson, Taron Vincent. So we're as deep as we have been in the D-line, that's good. We're young at linebacker, but it was good to see some of the younger guys play well in the playoffs last year. When you look at what Lathan Ransom did a safety and Josh Proctor did for us. Sevyn Banks had some really good games for us last year as well. And so although we're young, we do have more depth there. And so, like you said, it's going to be a challenge, so that's why this pre-season is going to be a really hard pre-season for us.

Q. How did the abnormal way to prepare for last season help you alter and improve the preparation for this season?

RYAN DAY: Well one of the things we missed was routine and a routine game. Coaches, players, the whole program strives on routine and getting back into that routine is what we missed desperately. So I think it's more of that is just, I don't think we all really appreciated how much we missed the routine until it was gone and every week it was something new and we're kind of tired of living day-to-day that way, not knowing at least what the routine's going to be on a weekly basis. So getting back into a normal game week, where you have your Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday all the way up to the game is something that we're really looking forward to and I think it's more of that than anything else.

Q. Obviously last season was pretty disrupted by the COVID situation for Ohio State and you mentioned Chris getting his vaccination this week. Just curious what kind of advice or approach are you taking with the vaccinations and where do things stand with the team right now?

RYAN DAY: Yeah, I mean the majority of our team is vaccinated. It's one of those things where I think you really have to take a look at the certain risks. There's certain risks with everything. I think there's risks with the virus, there's risks with the vaccine, there's risks with testing positive, there's risks with contact tracing, not being able to play. And we have left that up to the players and we try to do everything we can to educate them with our medical people, sports medicine. But I feel like we're in a pretty good place. I think the majority of our guys have been vaccinated and a few more are continuing to get vaccinated and I know it's something that's unique to each guy and we have kind of left it up to them.

Q. I want to ask you about the interior of your offensive line. Do you expect some good position battles there in camp and specifically who do you think's going to be your starting center?

RYAN DAY: Yeah, so on the D-line we roll the guys Larry's done a great job of that over the years. The O-line? Okay. O-line. Yeah, interior offensive line? Yeah, well, that's going to be a good battle there. I think Harry comes back, Harry Miller played the second year, very hard to do at Ohio State, and has come back, he's really changed his body, had surgery on his shoulder, looks great, had a really good off-season. Paris Johnson is moved in from tackle and done a really good job, embraced that role, really proud of the way he's embraced that role, this is one of the defensive linemen in the entire country, decides he wants to play guard right now, which ultimately is really going to help him in his versatility and his value down the road. But then you also have guys like Luke Wypler, Matt Jones, Josh Frye, Enokk Uimahi. Good news is we have a few guys in there and if they all deserve to play, we will roll those guys.

So some of those guys had to play in the Michigan State game, when we lost all those guys, some guys had to step up in a big way and did. So some of them did play, like Harry didn't play in the spring. So we'll have to, once we get them all in there, we'll have to figure that part of it out. But even at tackle, Dawand Jones did some really good things for us as well and Nick's coming off of a little bit of an injury there, so there's some good versatility that we have. We got to find the best five and go from there.

Q. You saw where Nick Saban said that Bryce Young is probably going to be upwards of a million dollars in endorsements, etcetera, with his name image likeness. I'm just wondering, are you costing one of your three guys money now delaying naming him the starter and where are you in that process and what would the starting quarterback at Ohio State be worth do you think on the open market?

RYAN DAY: You know, there was a lot of talk about projections last year, coming off of last year with what Justin had the opportunity to make, and certainly those were big numbers, but it didn't happen, so we'll see when it all does come to fruition. I think that stuff will happen naturally and I think the focus for all those guys just has to be development. If they're worried about starting, if they're worried about money, then they're worried about the wrong things. Those things happen and they will come naturally. But I do think that we need to consider, down the road, somewhere a long the line, maybe it's a year from now, figuring out how we spread some of that money out. Because certainly the quarterback at Ohio State is going to have unbelievable opportunity. The wide receiver, the running back, there's going to be certain positions, when you combine the brand of Ohio State, you combine the brand of Ohio State football, you combine the city of Columbus with our social media presence, it's like the perfect alignment. So the opportunity for our guys is going to be unlike anywhere else in the country.

However, how do we find ways to make sure we disseminate that throughout the team, because there's a lot of guys out there who are also playing football. There's guys who are blocking for the quarterback, there's guys who are covering the wide receivers. And while it's tricky and I don't really have quite the answer, I know that there's got to be some sort of formula down the road that we can consider.

Q. Let's just say for the past 10 years your success at Ohio State has been unbelievable. So, but getting these top-tier recruits from high school, bringing them to the next level, still having the same success, how do you go about in the locker room and on the field keeping these kids hungry and humble and kind of managing egos at the same time and keeping that winning culture?

RYAN DAY: I think it starts with recruiting the right people. I think recruiting in an honest manner, where you tell them exactly the way it's going to be when they get here is very, very important. I think that if you recruit them a certain way but then when they get here it changes, that's when you can foster hard feelings. We tell them that there's nothing guaranteed. You're going to compete at the highest level. If you can make it at Ohio State you can make it anywhere. And guys who are highly competitive, that's what they want, they want it hard. I talked to some off our freshmen who got in here recently in the last couple months and I asked them how they like the program, how they like the strength and conditioning and the summer program they go, it's hard, but that's why we came here.

That's what we tell them in recruiting. And if that's what they want and if that's what they want to embrace then they come here. For somebody who wants to just, hey, you're going to get on the field and play right away, that's not, this isn't the place for you. Now for a lot of guys they do play early, you're going to see a lot of our guys play as freshmen this year, but that's because they earned it. And I think if we recruit those type of people and those type of families we'll continue to build this competitive environment.

Q. You talk about how your recruiting and how much that plays a big role in the youth of your team. But as you look through camp what are those signs of maturity that you're looking for to sort of show you that you're on the right track?

RYAN DAY: That's a great question. I talked to our leadership council this week and we talked about just random acts of leadership where, in order to be a leader, you have to have different styles. One of the styles that's the hardest for our generation is that one where you have to get in someone's face and challenge them. And so we try to create those type of conflict environments in practice in workouts, Mick Marotti is the best in the business at it. And when guys can step up and speak out and have a voice in front of the team with leadership -- and the first time that it happens isn't with when you're down by a score at halftime in front of the locker room where we have to rally the troops together. It happens in practice, it happens in workouts. And when we see those type of things that's when we know we're taking the next step in terms of maturity. Because there's -- the last few times we have been in this stadium right here we have been down at halftime and we had to come out in the second half and play really, really well and the reason that happened was because of the leadership of our team.

Q. Obviously this recruiting cycle you brought in two more five star defensive linemen in Jackson, JT. You kind of started to answer it earlier, but what are the expectations for those guys in a group that is pretty loaded on that side or that defensive line that you have there?

RYAN DAY: Yeah, it's highly competitive. We roll guys. Larry Johnson loves to roll defensive linemen. So they're all going to play. And Jack and JT are in two different situations. Jack came in in January and put on a bunch of weight, he looks great, he's had a really good off-season. JT just got there and so it's going to be a little bit of a different lead into the season for him. But it's a long way to January. And so both of them are going to play and hopefully they play a lot.

Q. What's the difficulty in a program such as ours, yours, with the transfer rule changing where kids can leave immediately, particularly with the great numbers of top athletes that Ohio State recruits, do you have some difficulty, do you have some idea of some difficulty with that? Some kids have already left.

RYAN DAY: Yeah, it's inevitable that the guys are going to leave. However, I think that when you recruit the right type of people, when you recruit in a transparent manner and you're as honest as you can possibly be, then that's the best way to manage it. And I think that when you bring in great people who understand what it is, that there's going to be good days, there's going to be bad days -- but one of the things I tell recruits when they sit on my couch is, you know, it isn't always going to be great, you're going to wake up one day and ask yourself, why the heck did I come to Ohio State, I hate football. I said, how's that for recruiting? But that's the truth.

And if they understand that coming in, that there's going to be bad days, there's going to be hard days, but if you choose Ohio State for the right reasons, then you'll see it through to the end to your graduation.

However, there's going to be other situations. Joe Burrow is a great example of that. Joe got his degree from Ohio State, Dwayne up being the quarterback, he went on and had an unbelievable quarterback and still does today.

So it's changed the landscape of college football, but I think what it's really forced all recruits to do or, excuse me, all college coaches to do is recruit in a transparent manner, so that they're straight forward and tell them exactly what they're going to get when they get there. It's not always perfect, but that's our philosophy.

Q. With what Haskell Garrett went through last off-season, what impact did that have on the team and his leadership moving forward?

RYAN DAY: Very unique situation what Haskell went through. I think it makes you realize and I think it made him realize that in one day your whole life can change forever. To see the way he's responded, very proud of him, proud of the way he played last season, and hopefully he can now even take the next step.

But what a great story of somebody that had it almost all of it taken away, but then turned that leaf over and had a great season and hopefully will have another one this year.

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