

Ohio State Head Coach Ryan Day Says Justin Fields Has To Earn Starting Quarterback Position



When Ohio State sophomore quarterback Justin Fields announced his transfer from Georgia in January, most assumed he'd be the starter from day one. After all, he's among the highest-rated quarterback recruits of all time and didn't switch schools just to ride the bench.

But that didn't stop first-year head coach Ryan Day from having an open competition throughout spring camp or from refusing to name Fields the starter following the departure of redshirt freshman quarterback Matthew Baldwin, who announced he was leaving the program in April and then transferred to TCU in May.

"One of our core philosophies is that you don't just get given the starting position," Day said at Big Ten Media Days on Thursday afternoon. "You have to earn everything you get around here, and he hasn't done that.

"The hard thing for everybody to realize is that he is coming off the heels of (record-setting quarterback) Dwayne Haskins. I think a lot of people believe that Dwayne went from zero to 60 so fast and he just kind of jumped into the Heisman Trophy race and that all happened. Well, that was a very different scenario than Justin Fields.

"Justin hasn't won the job yet, and that's the first step in all of this. I know everybody wants to get way ahead of this and start talking about the Heisman, but how about winning the starting quarterback job first? You can't win the job when you're just learning the offense."

Although Baldwin is no longer in the picture, a new challenger has emerged in the form of Kentucky transfer and Dublin native Gunnar Hoak, who arrived on campus in June. The redshirt junior will have every chance to win the job in fall camp, but Day hopes someone emerges sooner rather than later.

"You'd like to get it done within the first couple weeks of camp, for sure," he said. "You'd like to know

who that is, because if it goes into the third week of preseason camp, then either they're both competing at a high level or nobody has stepped up yet. We'd like to have that within the second week of camp, but if not, we'll just keep it going. You just don't know what it's going to look like. Somebody could step off a curb (the wrong way) tomorrow."

All that said, Day believes Fields has all of the tools to be Ohio State's starter and a Heisman Trophy-caliber quarterback. It's just a matter of putting it all together.

"What I know about him is that physically he checks all the boxes: running, athleticism, size, power, throwing ability, arm strength, accuracy, intelligence. He has all those things. Now it's just a matter of going out and putting it all on the field and seeing what kind of product we've got. We'll find out in August once we get on the field and start with practice."