

Ohio State Practice Report: Buckeyes Complete 4th Day Of Spring Camp



After every NFL team flocked to the Woody Hayes Athletic Center for pro day Wednesday, Ohio State resumed spring camp Thursday in Columbus with its fourth practice on the indoor field.

Ahead of Saturday's practice with student appreciation day set to open its doors at 11 a.m., OSU followed day three Tuesday as several notable visitors — on the recruiting trail and from the professional ranks — took in drills and stuck around afterward.

Among the prospects on hand, a pair of in-state recruits highlighted the short list of visitors — Pickerington North 2021 defensive end commitment Jack Sawyer and Dublin Coffman 2020 four-star all-purpose back target Michael Drennen. Sawyer (6-5, 219) committed Feb. 3 to head coach Ryan Day and defensive line coach Larry Johnson, while Drennen (5-11, 195) has been on running backs coach Tony Alford's radar increasingly since the summer as an H-back recruit. Both prospects spent time with their respective position coaches recruiting them, Johnson and Alford, once practiced finished.

Beyond the Buckeyes' current roster and potential future players, now-former running back Mike Weber worked out individually with two of the Chicago Bears' top figureheads. Catching passes out of the backfield from OSU graduate assistant Chandler Whitmer, Chicago head coach Matt Nagy and Bears general manager Ryan Pace watched closely as Weber (5-9, 5/8, 211) ran routes and tracked balls. Weber, who clocked an official time of 4.47 seconds in the 40-yard dash March 1 during the NFL scouting combine at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, has turned heads in the draft process.

"I just proved (at pro day) I can run, I can run routes, catch the ball," Weber said. "Ohio State is kind of limited distributing the ball (while splitting carries), couldn't really get going. Just having all these great receivers with a great quarterback, you don't even need to throw the ball to your running back. So I feel like I showed teams I can maybe do both of those."

Weber's former position coach, Alford, met with the media after practice. So did linebackers coach Al Washington. Select players from each group joined Alford and Washington among those available for interviews.

While the running backs room adapts to life without Weber, J.K. Dobbins (5-10 217) leads the pack as

the incumbent starter. Although the junior looks to become Ohio State's workhorse with more carries in 2019, spring camp's first couple of weeks offer opportunities for others to enter the equation. Junior Demario McCall (5-9, 195), redshirt freshman Master Teague (5-11, 220) and freshman Marcus Crowley (6-1, 205) are all in Alford's mix.

"It was high energy today, so it's good to see," Alford said. "It's kind of still a lot of toughness. We've got some really skilled players. We've got to show still some more toughness, in my opinion, but it's good. Guys were flying around today. It's a good morning.

"Definitely my group, trying to finish some runs and just playing with an attitude and more to them. Demario's played some, but J.K.'s really the only one who's played extensive. So you've got a lot of young guys who haven't done a lot, as far as playing goes, so these are valuable reps for them."

Fewer units have come under more scrutiny from fans over the past year than the linebackers, where an overhaul is underway with Washington's replacement of two-year position coach Bill Davis, whom the Arizona Cardinals hired Jan. 11 as linebackers coach. While the Buckeyes return all three starters — junior Tuf Borland (6-1, 232) in the middle with senior Malik Harrison (6-3, 245) and junior Pete Werner (6-3, 239) on the outside — the competition extends to the sophomores with Teradja Mitchell (6-2, 242) in the middle with Dallas Gant (6-3, 232) and K'Vaughan Pope (6-1, 321) on the outside. Junior Baron Browning (6-3, 248) and senior Justin Hilliard (6-1, 235) round out the competitors.

"Just a high-character group," Washington, whom Day hired Jan. 8 from Michigan, said of OSU's linebackers. "Very talented, athletic, tough. A lot of room for just development, but what I mean by that is just learning the defense. But they're a great group (with) great leadership. Really impressed with that.

"Competition, it's kind of like next-man-up right now. We have so many guys that we roll them and try to put people in spots, but they've been competing. I've been pleased with that part of it. Everybody's been learning everything, which is great, which helps you in terms of trying to put people in positions to play. So it's been competitive, but guys are working."

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