

Coach Greg Studrawa Evaluates OL Recruiting, Discusses OSU Future



PASADENA, Calif. — Two days away from the Rose Bowl, Greg Studrawa is intently focused on getting Ohio State's uncertain offensive line ready for Washington's ferocious front seven, balancing injuries to starters like sophomore left tackle Thayer Munford (undisclosed) and fifth-year senior right guard Demetrius Knox (Lisfranc) as Tuesday's 5 p.m. ET kickoff via ABC approaches.

While the Buckeyes' front five feature some shakeups potentially on the way with junior Joshua Alabi up next to start for Munford, in addition to redshirt freshman Wyatt Davis replacing Knox for the second straight contest after doing so Dec. 1 in the Big Ten Championship Game, might another one occur among the position group as incoming head coach Ryan Day reevaluates his staff when he takes over full-time responsibilities after the Rose Bowl?

Studrawa, who has been at OSU since outgoing head coach Urban Meyer hired him before the 2016 season, took several key recruiting trips with Day after athletic director Gene Smith introduced the second-year offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Dec. 4 as the team's 25th head coach. During the presser, Day declined to discuss coaching changes, deferring those decisions to Jan. 2 when the offseason officially begins.

As the date inches closer, Studrawa stays locked on shielding sophomore quarterback Dwayne Haskins against the Huskies' defensive line, keeping Alabi and Davis ready while waiting to cross that bridge with Day when the time is right.

"We've been going along as business as normal," Studrawa told BSB at Ohio State media day Sunday outside Rose Bowl Stadium. "Recruiting is going on, those things and preparing and trying to win this game — to get these guys to play in this game. Then I'm sure we'll sit down and talk about how (Day) wants it to go. If he wants to change how we recruit or change what we do, then we'll sit down and have that as soon as we get this game over."

When the Buckeyes inked 15 letters of intent Dec. 19 when Day addressed the 2019 recruiting class, they saw their efforts dip along the offensive line. Springfield (Ill.) Sacred Heart Griffin three-star offensive tackle target Nick Broeker signed with Ole Miss, Huntington (W.Va.) Spring Valley four-star offensive guard commitment Doug Nester delayed signing until Feb. 6 with official visits on deck and OSU only signed two at the position — Mentor, Ohio, four-star offensive tackle Ryan Jacoby and Buford, Ga., five-star center Harry Miller.

"It's important to go identify them," Day said. "We've got to go identify them. We've got to do a really good job obviously in the 2020 class. We're a little bit down in the O-line, so we've got to do a great job moving forward to get that addressed. We're hoping Mike stays. Obviously that would be a huge part of this next year, and so into January we'll keep looking at it. We have a few guys obviously that we're close with, and so we'll just look to close those guys out."

Ohio State lost longtime commitment and Marietta, Ga., four-star offensive tackle Jake Wray — who pledged April 23 and is freshman offensive tackle Max Wray's younger brother — while Nester's status is wavering. Jacoby and Miller are binding, but the Buckeyes have spots to fill in the trenches — especially with junior center Michael Jordan considering the 2019 NFL draft, while starters such as senior right tackle Isaiah Prince and fifth-year senior left guard Malcolm Pridgeon are graduating.

"I think you've got to evaluate yourself two years after the class — two years after those guys get here, how are they?" Studrawa said. "Wyatt Davis, he's starting now. (Redshirt freshman center) Josh Myers, he's going to go start. Those two kids are going to be starting for four years. Thayer Munford came in, (sat behind starters) one year, started all year this year. So those are the kind of things that have to happen here. That's what's happened. We went and got Thayer, went and got Wyatt, went and got Josh Myers. I think Max Wray had a knee injury (the 2018 season), he's going to be just fine.

"So after a year or two, you have to look at, are those guys playing? If they're not playing, then that was a mistake. Like I said before, there's guys in that room that aren't here right now that, after two years, couldn't play here, so they decided to leave. We've gotten some guys these past two years that have followed that protocol. Wyatt and Josh and Thayer, those are the kind of kids that have followed the protocol — two years ready, one year ready and then they jump in and they play and they play at a high level. That tells you you're getting the right guy. If they're not ready to play at that time, then you know what? Then you don't know whether that guy's going to be able to make it or not and that might have been a mistake, so that's how I evaluate it."

Over the previous two recruiting classes, Studrawa helped sign six offensive linemen — three in 2017 and three in 2018 — all of which were ranked top-300 prospects overall by the 247Sports composite. While the 2018 class only has two, yielding depth concerns, Studrawa was confident in how OSU has gone about qualitatively evaluating offensive linemen, despite the difficulties.

"There's a lot of factors that go into it," Studrawa said. "You have to really study and be careful with the level of play he's playing because a guy can look really, really good on film. And if you look at the competition level, it's not very good, then you can easily get fooled. If the guy's not from a program that really coaches him hard and getting after him, and demands, they won't have success here because they know it's demanding here. So there's so many factors other than just turning on the film and watching the film. You have to get to know and unlock the kid inside and see how hard you're going to be able to push him, how hard he wants success. That's really the key and those things are hard sometimes."

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