

Day Says Buckeyes Need Stover To Replace Farrell At TE



Ohio State's plans for Jeremy Ruckert this season are simple: get the senior tight end more touches in the offense.

But Ruckert alone can't satisfy the full array of needs from the position group, as Ohio State has grown accustomed to two-tight end sets utilizing both Ruckert and Luke Farrell over the past couple years.

With Farrell gone to the NFL, head coach Ryan Day has plenty of options to choose from in pairing Ruckert with a new running mate. If his comments from Wednesday's press conference are any indication though, Day has zeroed in on one candidate in particular.

"Cade Stover was recognized as an Iron Buckeye here, which was huge. We had a bunch of guys who did, but it was significant that he did," Day said. "So he had a really good summer. We need him to replace Luke, that's really what we're looking for."

Stover, a Mansfield, Ohio, native who spent time at both linebacker and defensive end for the Buckeyes before making a permanent switch to tight end, was Ohio's fourth-rated player in the class of 2019.

Behind a pair of NFL-caliber talents in Farrell and Ruckert last season, Stover logged just six snaps as a redshirt freshman, and still has yet to catch a pass in a Buckeye uniform.

Farrell's absence should clear up plenty of opportunity for Stover entering his third year in the program though, and Day and the Ohio State coaching staff are buzzing about his efforts in the weight room this offseason.

The aforementioned distinction of Iron Buckeye, which Day said Stover earned this week, is bestowed upon players by strength and conditioning coach Mickey Marotti prior to the start of fall camp, rewarding consistent achievement over the summer.

"That's coach Mick, and that's something that he takes a lot of pride in," Day said. "We have Iron Buckeye, we have gold, we have red, we have gray. So heading into the year we have a champions' meeting, and that meeting happened last night, and it was the culmination of 11 weeks of work off of spring practice, and there's a bunch of guys who got that. More than we've had in the past."

Day said the label carries considerable weight in his program, and often serves as a predictor of success for the season to come.

“An Iron Buckeye is somebody who’s been consistent the whole way through, their work ethic is above and beyond others -- never misses a day, never takes a day off and really strains to get better,” Day said. “It’s something that, around here, means a lot. I know this, when you’re an Iron Buckeye around here, you’ve got a chance to make an impact, because if you’re doing that for 11 weeks around coach Mick, something good’s happening.”

Having put in all the necessary work over the past few months, Stover must now translate that offseason progress into tangible results on the field.

Despite being singled out by Day, Stover is just one member of a tight end unit that includes former four-star wide receiver recruit Gee Scott Jr. and a pair of young three-star prospects in Joe Royer and Sam Hart, just to name a few.

Day said the entire group must step up during fall camp, even if he seems hopeful that Stover is the one to emerge as Farrell’s true heir apparent.

“We want to see who takes the next step to replace Luke,” Day said. “Now, is it gonna look exactly like that when we play the first game? I don’t know, I’m excited to see. But I am excited about the growth of those couple guys, and I think they can help us.”