

Director Of Player Personnel Mark Pantoni Discusses Ohio State's Plan Following Coronavirus Restrictions



Mark Pantoni, Ohio State assistant athletic director and director of player personnel, spoke to the media by phone teleconference to talk about what the Buckeyes have been doing in order to gain so many recruits in the month of March despite a recruiting dead period, which was caused by fears of spreading the coronavirus. He also discussed how the Buckeyes will handle these unknown times moving forward.

- Pantoni started the teleconference by thanking the first responders for everything they do, as well as athletic director Gene Smith for keeping the Ohio State staff and players in the know throughout these unique times.
- He said the five commits in the month of March was more a product of the recruiting that happened before the dead period, and that many of those kids already had their mind made up before.
- On Joe Burrow, Chase Young and Jeff Okudah being top picks in the NFL Draft: "That's why we do what we do." Called all three players "elite competitors" and great kids who will have futures in the NFL.
- On still building such a strong class, Pantoni said that it's only the beginning of April, and they're not trying to win any recruiting awards in April. Said it's important to keep the relationships already established through December.
- Said the early December signing period has helped Ohio State move forward and into future recruiting classes earlier than usual.
- On disadvantages of missing April evaluation period: "That's a significant loss," said not being able to bring players in or not being able to visit at high schools is difficult, and "the film's going to take a lot of weight now."
- Said this free time has allowed coaches to begin to watch film on 2022 recruits much earlier than usual. Said coaches were talking about how those kids aren't very good, and aren't used to seeing such a raw prospect. Pantoni told them "I know, they're 14, 15 years old."
- Pantoni said that his biggest concern with the state of recruiting is that there are too many verbal offers being thrown out by everyone, many of which aren't committable.
- Said it is too early to tell if the recruiting calendar should be changed or if signing day should be

pushed back due to this extended dead period.

- Pantoni said Ohio State is still searching for who the team's top 2022 quarterback targets are. Said they also can't make too many evaluations yet because some guys haven't played varsity football yet.
- On how Urban Meyer would have handled this current situation. "Probably a little bit different than Ryan," but said he can't speak to exactly what Meyer would have done in a time like this.
- Said there's "not much" that can be done right now besides relying on game film, and that seeing workouts through Skype or Zoom is difficult because there's nowhere where players can do those workouts currently.
- Called the decision an "absolute no-brainer" to stay at Ohio State when Day took over for Meyer as head coach.
- On the 2022 Ohio recruits being lower on rankings than the 2021 in-state recruits, Pantoni said Ohio State doesn't pay a ton of attention to rankings compared to its own evaluation, but said that Ohio players may start developing more past the spring and eventually move up in the rankings.
- Said working has been extremely difficult because he has to balance being a dad to two 4-year olds and doing his job. Also gave a shoutout to teachers and mothers because of that, as this time has been testing his patience.
- Personally said that having the No. 1 class in the country is "nice and all," but it will be more important to look at the success three years from now. Also again said it's only the beginning of April, so there's much more work to be done.
- Said that not having a strong recruiting class at a certain position one season can definitely open the door the following season because of the opportunity that recruits can see.
- Pantoni called running backs coach Tony Alford one of the best recruiters Ohio State has on staff and commended the job he has done, but reiterated that no commit is a one-person job.
- On the transfer portal, he said was checking it multiple times per day initially, but now, transfer news hits social media so fast that he often gets his news from there first.
- Said Ohio State's increasingly high academic standards has led to some "tough conversations" with recruits about not being able to make it academically with the program. But also said that it is all part of what makes the culture so strong with the Buckeyes.

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