

Former Buckeyes Cornelius Green, Bill Conley React To Tate Martell's Possible Transfer



Ohio State rising sophomore quarterback Tate Martell entered the NCAA transfer portal early this week, inciting various reactions across the country.

BSB spoke with former Ohio State assistant coach Bill Conley and a former Buckeye quarterback who experienced a position battle himself, Cornelius Green, to gauge their perspectives.

Conley, who spent 17 years on the Ohio State coaching staff, said he was more surprised by the timing of Martell's decision to enter the transfer portal than the decision itself. Conley saw Martell's omnipresent confidence as an indication that he would view the transfer of rising sophomore Justin Fields as a challenge and embrace it head on.

"I'm a little surprised it happened now," Conley said. "I thought he wanted to give it a real run at the starting spot this spring. Obviously with (sophomore quarterback Matthew) Baldwin healthy and Justin Fields coming in he was going to have to win the spot."

Conley said he understood why Martell might want to transfer with the Buckeyes going out and bringing in Fields, who was the 247Sports composite's No. 2 overall prospect and No. 1 dual-threat quarterback in the 2018 recruiting class. With Ohio State getting Fields in the fold, perhaps Martell felt like head coach Ryan Day had already decided the former Bulldog was his signal caller of the future.

Conley thought Martell might approach the situation like former Buckeye quarterback Joe Burrow, who transferred to LSU after losing the quarterback battle to Dwayne Haskins during spring ball - or at least recognizing that the writing was on the wall.

"And I could see him transferring at the end of spring practice if he indeed was not the guy," Conley said. "But I'm a little shocked he would do it this early."

Quarterback battles can be messy situations by nature, with the uncertainty surrounding the leader of the offense and the rarity of which backup quarterbacks see the field. College quarterback battles are extra messy because top programs usually have multiple starter-worthy options and eligibility is limited.

Ohio State has had its fair share of quarterback battles, with few as pivotal as the controversy in 1973. Then a sophomore, Cornelius Green (who spelled his last name Greene during his playing career) had to

beat out senior captain and multi-year starter Greg Hare for the starting job.

“For me, when I came to Ohio State, there were six All-Americans and you knew only one was going to play,” Green said. “This is a big boy league. If you’re not a big boy and you don’t have big kahunas, you’re gonna have to keep it moving.

“You just got to have confidence when you’re at Ohio State, it’s just like that. I beat out the senior and a third-year starter - you thought I was going to leave because my sophomore year I wasn’t going to start? Greg Hare, we chose him as a captain, I said, ‘Hell, still, I’m gonna play.’ And I just put my nose to the grind and boom, next thing you know I’m starting over the third-year starter and the captain of the team.”

Green went on to become an All-American and lead Ohio State to three Big Ten championships, finishing his career as the leading passer in school history despite playing in a run-oriented offense.

An adept runner himself, Green posited that an injury to Fields, who is also an aggressive runner, is possible. Since nothing is guaranteed, Green said he wished Martell would have embraced the challenge.

During the Ohio State men’s basketball team’s game against Michigan State on Jan. 6, Fields was sitting courtside with Urban Meyer and Dwayne Haskins, stimulating immediate media buzz just two days after Fields’ transfer announcement.

With an immense amount of attention surrounding Fields and his transfer to Ohio State, perhaps Martell felt like he was being overlooked and sidestepped. Green admitted he expected Martell to welcome the competition.

“I’m a little perplexed that Tate is letting this media savvy of (Fields) coming here, thinking that just because (Fields is) coming here, all the sudden he’s not going to be playing,” Green said. “I just don’t understand that one.”

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