

Column: Help Needed On Ohio State's Offensive Line



Entering spring camp, it was clear that Ohio State had some work to do on its offensive line.

The Buckeyes lost the services of a pair of All-American tackles in Paris Johnson Jr. and Dawand Jones, while also reeling from the surprise departure of center Luke Wypler, as the trio decided to enter the NFL Draft. With three spots to fill on the offensive line, Ohio State largely looked within for contributors to step up into the roles — adding just one transfer in Victor Cutler, who the Buckeyes swiftly moved to center after he played tackle at Louisiana Monroe.

With Matthew Jones and Donovan Jackson remaining at the starting guard spots, head coach Ryan Day and offensive line coach Justin Frye entered the spring with a rebuilding project up front. But, if the unit's performance in practice sessions open to media and Saturday's Spring Game indicates how that rebuilding process has gone over the past month, then Ohio State's offense may be in trouble.

As has been the case all spring, the offensive line looked strong when run blocking but struggled mightily in passing scenarios during the Spring Game, and Day said as much after the game.

"(They were) inconsistent," Day said. "I thought there were some good things but we need more consistency there."

In all, the unit helped the offense churn out 223 rushing yards and an average of 4.7 yards per carry, putting together a solid day on the ground against the Buckeye defense, but also allowed the defense to rack up five sacks while quarterbacks Kyle McCord and Tristian Gebbia felt pressure throughout the Spring Game.

Much of that pressure came off the edge, notably at the tackle positions that Ohio State did not address through the transfer portal during the offseason. Regardless of who manned either tackle spot — whether that be Josh Fryar, Tegra Tshabola, Zen Michalski or anyone else — none of the current potential contributors registered a Spring Game performance that would alleviate any concern that surrounded the tackle vacancies.

The interior offensive line wasn't fully absolved of any wrongdoing either, as three of the defense's sacks were generated from the interior with Tyleik Williams, Hero Kanu and Ty Hamilton all registering a quarterback takedown.

In the leadup to the Spring Game, Day made it clear that he felt comfortable with the current personnel along the offensive front. But, he also left the door open for the possibility that the Buckeyes may dip into the portal for some help on the offensive line.

"We have to kind of go through and see how the (Spring) Game plays out and see how that looks on film, take the body of work, and then make some decisions from there," Day said. "It's a delicate situation, for sure. I think we believe in the guys that we have, otherwise, we would say, 'Yeah, we have to bring in a guy.'"

It's not clear if Day's belief in the current personnel may have changed following the lowly Spring Game outing, but it's obvious that the Buckeyes need some help up front if they are to continue the offensive excellence that has been produced throughout the Day era.

With the second transfer portal window opening on Saturday and running through April 30, Day and Frye should be actively searching for some new blood to inject into the offensive line unit as a whole.