

Offensive Line Depth Taking Shape For Justin Frye



Coming out of the spring and continuing into the summer, one of the chief concerns for Ohio State head coach Ryan Day was depth on the offensive line. The starters were unquestioned, with Paris Johnson Jr., Donovan Jackson, Luke Wypler, Matthew Jones and Dawand Jones going from left to right this upcoming season. Beyond those five, however?

"I do think that definitely offensive line is something we have to continue to work on," Day said at Big Ten Media Days.

Monday marked the fourth day of preseason practice for the Buckeyes and just the second with pads on, and the offensive line - specifically the depth behind the starting five - remains a focus for Day and offensive line coach Justin Frye, who is entering his first season at Ohio State.

"Some of those young guys that develop in the summer, they got more comfortable in the summer. All of the sudden, you put the pads back on, it starts flashing a little bit, you got to see those guys play, they've got to feel the physicality, the friction," Frye said. "As we get through this week, and the next couple of weeks, that's when you really start to try and maybe pencil guys in or shift some guys around. Right now we have to go play ball, we've got to identify those younger guys that can creep their way up the depth chart."

Early returns from open practice periods have indicated that junior Jakob James, senior Enokk Vimahi and sophomore Josh Fryar are first off the bench at center, guard and tackle, respectively, with sophomore Zen Michalski at tackle and junior Trey Leroux at guard on the second team as well, though these rotations are subject to change as fall camp rolls in.

Regardless of who ultimately winds up on the two or three deep, Frye said everyone is taking advantage of opportunities in front of them.

"Right now they're just working, they're buying in," Frye said. "There's not a guy out there right now that's kind of just showing up. We're talking about taking reps or using reps, those guys are using their opportunities, they're using reps, whether they win the rep or lose the rep, they're using those right now."

"Those guys as you said, the young tackles, Ennok's in there working his butt off, Jakob James is back and feeling good and fighting," he continued. "So as you just work your way down the youth of that, these guys right now, they're all just working, and it'll shake out as it goes."

The search for depth on the offensive line is as much about backups for this season as it is finding potential starters for 2023 and beyond, with both starting tackles likely off to the NFL after this season. That journey started in the spring and is stretching into fall camp, with work set to continue until Ohio State's season begins against Notre Dame on Sept. 3.

"Those guys worked this summer and they are comfortable. We just have to keep practicing," Frye said. "We have to go watch this tape, see the good today, the bad today, the ugly today, and trim the fat and keep working. Everyone included took that, we've got to build that, and then that's what we're going to do. So we attack that, they attacked that individually, and we did it as unit and get through camp and see where we're at."