

Ohio State Co-Defensive Coordinator Greg Mattison Preview Ohio State's Season Opener



Ohio State co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison met remotely with the media on Wednesday afternoon to discuss his unit's preparation for Saturday's season opener against Nebraska (12 p.m. on FOX).

Here's a bullet-point recap of what he had to say:

- On the play of the linebackers: "I've been really proud of the entire defensive unit, but this is a special group. It starts with the leadership." Mentioned Tuf Borland and Justin Hilliard in particular and how having them offsets the lack of experience elsewhere on defense. "When you have a linebacking crew that will make sure people are aligned correctly, you can make sure there aren't any big plays."
- Mattison heaped a ton of praise on the defensive line, most notably Jonathan Cooper, Tyreke Smith, Tyler Friday and Tommy Togiai. (Cooper) has just been waiting to play. Every snap he takes is 100 miles an hour."
- Mattison said they're really aware of Nebraska wide receiver Wan'Dale Robinson and they're focusing on neutralizing him in the opener.
- On defensive tackle Haskell Garrett, who suffered a gunshot wound to the face this summer: "That's day-to-day. He's in every meeting, every walk-thought and he's doing everything a guy who would be playing is doing." Ultimately said it's not their call, it's the doctor's decision.
- Mattison calls the Cornhuskers "a very good football team," but says this season is more about the sacrifices
- Mattison said Borland is a different linebacker this year, noting he's faster, quicker, stronger and more vocal because he is more confident. Added Borland reminds him of NFL players he's coached. "He's a true, true leader, and I think the sky is the limit for him."
- Mattison credited Baron Browning for his hard work during his switch back to SAM linebacker. Said his attitude is "remarkable."
- Mattison, who plans to coach from the press box for the first time since he was at Texas A&M in 1990, on new defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs: "He brings us some different ways of playing defense, but we still have our defense. We're still doing what Ohio State does."
- On Pete Werner's move to WILL linebacker: "We felt Pete was too valuable and Pete was too good of a football player (to stay at SAM.)"
- Mattison on the Ohio State coaching staff: "There are no egos."

- Mattison said he primarily focuses on the front seven while Coombs primarily focuses on the secondary, as those are their specialties as former defensive line/linebackers and secondary coaches, respectively.
- Mattison mentioned freshman linebacker Cody Simon and Mitchell Melton as players who have caught his eye this fall. Added fans will really like what they see from those two.
- Beyond that, asked what players have stood out, Mattison said, "All of them." Didn't want to leave anybody out. "This is a group with a lot to prove."

For four free issues of the now-weekly print edition of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, sign up at the link below. No credit card required: <http://www.buckeyesports.com/subscribe-4issue-trial/>