

Ohio State Offensive Coordinator/QBs Coach Chip Kelly Excited For New Role, Raves About Talent On Roster, Coaching Staff



Since taking over at Oregon in 2009, Chip Kelly has consistently been placed under the football limelight, having spent 14 of the last 15 years as a collegiate and NFL head coach for four separate programs and posting a combined 109-76 record in that span.

While that head coaching experience — along with his innovative and up-tempo offensive scheme — has allowed him to become a recognizable name in football, the 60-year-old Kelly has opted to take on a different role this upcoming season, leaving his post at UCLA to join close friend and former coworker Ryan Day as Ohio State's offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach.

Speaking with local media for the first time since replacing Bill O'Brien — who left Ohio State after a quick stint as offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach to become head man at Boston College — Kelly said he was drawn to the open assistant position in Columbus because it allowed him to not only reunite with an old friend in Day, but also take a step back from his usual head coaching duties and zero in on leading a quarterback room cultivating an offensive game plan, something he has not done since the 2008 season with Oregon.

"Sometimes I do a lot of things other people don't do, I don't know if that's right or wrong," Kelly said. "But I think (my interest in being an offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach again) started when we were preparing for (UCLA's) bowl game (against Boise State). Ryan Gunderson, who is a great quarterbacks coach, left to go to Oregon State as the offensive coordinator, so he wasn't there, and I actually coached the quarterbacks in the bowl game.

"So I started to think, I haven't actually coached the position since 2008. And I think my wife (Jennifer) said, 'I haven't seen you this happy in a long time.' To me, the best part of football is football. And so you have to do football, and not do some of the things that are involved with the head coaching

gig...Because as a head coach, you sit in on position meetings, but then you're always getting pulled out. There are other things that are involved with being a (head) coach, it's more of a CEO operation right now. The job and the landscape in college football has changed.

"There was a story about John Lennon when he was a little kid, he had an assignment of 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' He said, 'I want to be happy.' And his teacher said, 'I don't think you understand the assignment.' And his mom said, 'I don't think you understand life.' So I just want to be happy. And I'm really happy coaching the position. I'm really happy to be at this place, it would've taken a special place for me to leave UCLA because I love those players and I love that coaching staff. But to be here with Ryan, who I have a great relationship with since he was a little kid — so I think a lot of things just fell into place."

Aside from his close relationship with Day and return to his assistant coaching roots, Kelly also said he gravitated towards Ohio State because of the sheer talent and experience currently on its roster, which includes a unique mix of returning players and promising youngsters. The longtime head coach said he was impressed by both the abilities and makeup of the players on this year's roster during the first day of spring practice on Tuesday, a reality that makes him excited to head to clock into the Woody Hayes Athletic Center every day.

"The one thing after day one, I can tell you that there's a lot of skill set out there," Kelly said. "That's what gets you excited. You jump out of bed in the morning and you're excited to go to work because of the talent that you get. But the one thing that's the most impressive is the work ethic that goes along with that. It's not just empty talent, you have some kids — all of them, since I've been here — that want to work. So that's what gets you excited."

Kelly added that this excitement also stretches to Ohio State's coaching staff. He said he has also been impressed with the connectedness and overall abilities of his fellow assistants since he arrived in early February, which he thinks makes the Buckeyes a cohesive and knowledgeable group of leaders.

"The one thing that really struck me is there is an amazing coaching staff here," Kelly said. "If you get a chance to talk to (associate head coach and defensive line coach) Larry Johnson just about football, (secondary/cornerbacks coach) Tim Walton, (wide receivers coach) Brian Hartline, any of the guys on staff here, it's a very collaborative effort. I think everybody's on the same page. It's not our offense and their defense, it's Ohio State...And that's the thing I love, just in the short term I've been here...We're all trying to make each other better, and we're all trying to develop this team."

While the Buckeyes may have everything they need to compete for a championship on paper — the addition of Kelly included — the longtime coach said that the team's success will ultimately be determined by the quality of work and preparation they put in both in the months leading up to and during the season, something he thinks can separate the program from the other contenders if done correctly.

"Obviously, this is a very talented football team," Kelly said. "But Ryan made a point to the team, I think our players really understand, it is the non-talented things that are going to help this team win. It's the discipline we're going to have, the skill development we're going to have here during spring ball that's going to be the difference-maker. Because there are a lot of talented teams out there."