

# Ohio State Still Sorting Out Pecking Order On Special Teams



As Ohio State works through the summer, the team – including special teams coach Parker Fleming – is still trying to nail down starters for the Buckeyes' special teams unit, with several of these position battles set to extend into the fall.

Beginning at kicker, it's been a two-man race between sophomore Jayden Fielding and junior Parker Lewis. Fielding handled kickoffs last season for Ohio State, while Lewis did not appear after being made eligible to play midseason after transferring in from USC. Both kicked in the spring game, with Lewis hitting a 38-yard and Fielding missing from 40 yards out, and both connected on an extra-point attempt.

"I feel like we're in a good place," Fleming said on May 30. "We had three guys get a lot of reps in the spring. Jake (Siebert)'s no longer here, so we've really got two guys that both had great springs, Jayden and Parker. Jayden kicked off for us last year. Parker's got experience other places. We're excited about the fall. A lot of talent. Now it's time to figure out what happens down the line."

Fleming said that consistency will be key in determining who lines up this season for Ohio State. It's a position that has been largely stable for the Buckeyes, with Noah Ruggles hitting on 37 of 41 field-goal attempts over the last two seasons and missing just one of his 149 extra-point attempts.

"You want to have a guy that you know what you're going to get, that's really what it comes down to," Fleming said. "You know, he's got to make kicks, got to be dependable."

As for the punting unit, there's no question as to who will boot the ball away, with Jesse Mirco returning for his third season with the Buckeyes. He averaged 45.4 yards per attempt last season. At long snapper, though, Ohio State will be welcoming in a new face in former Arizona State long snapper John Ferlmann, who joined the team this offseason.

"He had a good spring," Fleming said. "Interesting dynamic last year with our starting long snapper (Bradley Robinson) getting hurt. You never want injuries, you plan for them. Mason (Arnold) stepped in, did a really nice job. We want to have competition, and so John had great film as a freshman. I know some people that knew him out of Arizona State, and he wanted to come compete against the best and he did and I thought he had a really nice spring."

With Robinson exhausting his eligibility and Arnold transferring to Michigan State, Ferlmann is the expected to be Ohio State's starter, with sophomore Max Lomonico to back him up.

Fleming also touched on the Buckeyes' potential return game next season, which took a hit in terms of depth when wideout Kaleb Brown - who took snaps throughout the spring - entered the portal this spring. Even so, Fleming expects several potential names to see the field this season.

"We had a bunch of guys that have done it around here," he said. "Emeka (Egbuka), obviously, two years ago was really good. Xavier Johnson ended the season for us last year, had a really nice little stretch there. We've got a bunch of names of guys that can do it. We feel really good about it.

"There's always that balance of how do you make sure you have the right guy to do all your different jobs," he continued. "You go back to the beginning of 2021, TreVeyon (Henderson) was back there to start. And then he started getting a bunch more carries. And our running back room has a bunch of different players. And so we'll see kind of how the summer and fall develop, but we feel good about our depth. The question is who's going to be that guy? And I'm not quite sure we're there yet."