Ohio State Strength And Conditioning Coach Mickey Marotti Discusses Offseason Workouts



Ohio State director of sports performance Mickey Marotti met with the media at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center for about 30 minutes of Wednesday afternoon, at which time he discussed the Buckeyes' offseason workouts and previewed spring practices.

Here's a brief recap of what he had to say:

- Marotti praised this year's group of 14 early enrollees for their focus and preparation. "They came mentally ready for what is to come."
- Marotti said the early enrollees are not working out with other members of the team yet, but they'll integrate by the end of the month.
- "I think they can be as good as they want to be," Marotti said of early enrollee wide receivers Julian Fleming, Gee Scott, Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Mookie Cooper.
- Marotti said there's "no doubt" the team will use the Fiesta Bowl loss to Clemson as motivation. Added there's a sign with the score of the game in the weight room.
- Marotti said quarterback Justin Fields is "completely different" than he was when he arrived one year ago. "He's earned a reputation of being a hard worker. He knows he's the leader now. He knows what needs to be done. He has a whole different mindset of the offense. To me, it's completely different."
- Marotti said Fields has not been restricted in workouts despite ending season with a sprained MCL.
- Marotti said players from Ohio and Texas come into college more physically ready for the strength program than others, pointing out Cincinnati native and five-star offensive tackle Paris Johnson as one of those players.
- Marotti said the workload might be different for some players. Added there is a developmental group of younger players, the veterans and the early enrollees. "We have to train them at a different pace."
- Marotti said leadership on the team develops naturally, and that will be needed this spring with several key departures on both sides of the ball.
- Marotti said wide receiver Kamryn Babb is fully participating in workouts after missing last season with a knee injury, but he's unsure if running back Marcus Crowley will be ready for the spring after suffering a knee injury of his own.
- "It's awesome," Marotti said of defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs' return to Ohio State. Said

his tenure in the NFL brings even more credibility to his coaching and recruiting ability. “That’s a big hammer he’s got now.”

- On assistant strength and conditioning coach Phil Matusz departure for Boston College. “Part of my job is to help develop those guys so when they have that opportunity, they’re ready to rock and roll.
- Marotti said the large group of early enrollees allows them to support each other while making the transition to college because they’re all in the same boat.
- On Fleming: “He’s talented. So far so good.”
- On quarterbacks Jack Miller and C.J. Stroud: “They’re good. They’re hungry. They have to improve in some things physically. You can see the vision of, ‘I have to get there.’”
- On defensive end Jonathon Cooper, a team captain who missed several games with an injury and ultimately decided to redshirt last season: “He is such an outgoing, positive, energized, juiced-up leader. And when you see that happen, it’s awful.”
- On linebacker Tuf Borland: “He’s one of the most dependable players I’ve been around for 30 years. You need leadership like that. He’s the epitome of what a collegiate athlete should be in terms of preparation and training.”
- Marotti said leaders must be seen, felt and heard. “Anybody can cheerlead.”
- On running back Master Teague: “There are very few who are physically fit like he is.”
- On defensive end Zach Harrison: “His ceiling is pretty high.” Said his leadership abilities have jumped off the page, though it was unexpected because he was very quiet throughout the recruiting process.
- On offensive tackle Dawand Jones: “I love him. He’s a great kid who smiles all the time. Even when you try to coach him really hard, he just smiles.” Mentions the height disparity between him and Ohio State’s nutritionist.