

Playcalling A Learning Opportunity For Hartline During Spring Camp



As Ohio State progresses through spring camp, with the annual spring game fast approaching on April 15, one of the most intriguing storylines out of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center has been the potential introduction of offensive coordinator Brian Hartline as the Buckeyes' offensive play caller.

Hartline has called plays on a practice-to-practice basis at spring camp, including Saturday's scrimmage, while gaining some comfort in the role. But right now, Hartline's introduction to play-calling duties is still in its infancy, and Hartline said his focus is largely on having his players fine-tuned and competing during spring practices.

"There is a growing thing that's happening (in regard to play calling) and yes, there's an opportunity, but there's a pedestal that it's being put on right now," Hartline said. "We don't even know how it's going to play out in the fall. I'm not thinking about it that way, I know it's a great talking point, but I just want to get these guys ready for spring ball and want to evaluate and identify our top 20 to 30 players.

"We're working in a world of install, situational football, and being great in situational football," he continued. "We have other focuses other than, necessarily, who is calling the plays."

After spending the previous five seasons as Ohio State's wide receivers coach, Hartline is still getting adjusted to the weight of calling plays and recognized the newness of the procedure as more of a learning opportunity.

"I don't think it would be fair to set goals (as a play caller) because I haven't done it," Hartline said. "It would be like: my first time racing a car, I want to make it around the track without blowing up the car. It's just taking it one day at a time. I always constantly evaluate, my brain doesn't stop, so that's constantly happening.

"I know this is going to be a talking point, but I'm just trying to explain that we're going to call plays every day in practice and then go from there."

Although the newness of the play-calling opportunity is still weighing on Hartline, he said he felt comfortable doing so during Saturday's scrimmage.

"I enjoy it," Hartline said. "We're not scheming anybody right now. We're trying to put ourselves into good play calls or bad play calls against our defense, but not necessarily scheming I would say."

"It's fun. It's just getting a feel for what's in for them right now and what do we have that's probably a decent call against (our defense). It's really an opportunity for guys just to operate, get things in, get them executed, substitute and let guys compete."

The introduction of potential play-calling duties hasn't been the only adjustment Hartline has had to make this offseason, but fitting into his role as offensive coordinator has also weighed over him this spring.

While Hartline acknowledged that he still spends the lion's share of his time with the receivers, he said there is still a difference in how he approaches each practice now that he's in more of an oversight role.

"You can feel the difference a little bit," Hartline said. "It's not necessarily an allocation of time, but there's probably a little more in my head that's going on. But, it's awesome. It's definitely a little more uncomfortable than it would have been this time last year, but I would say that anytime you're uncomfortable, you have a chance to grow."

"I'm just trying to figure out what I find most important and then to allocate my time properly," he continued. "There's definitely a balance of time, but it's good. I enjoy it."