

Reactions To QB Matthew Baldwin's Decision To Transfer From Ohio State

Ohio State redshirt freshman Matthew Baldwin announced on Thursday evening he intends to transfer from the program.

"I want to start by saying I am grateful for my time in Columbus and the relationships formed here at Ohio State," Baldwin said in a statement. "This spring was huge for me to finally get back on the field after my ACL tear. It felt really great to be in the mix of things and taking snaps again. Being able to play in front of 75,000 of the greatest fans in the country was beyond exciting.

"At the same time, spring was a tough time for me personally. My family and I have prayed and talked a lot about where I belong and what is best for me. In the end, we feel like it'd be better for me to step away from Ohio State. I want everyone to know this isn't done out of anger or frustration, but I'm not just a football player."

The 6-3, 215-pound Baldwin came to Columbus as a four-star recruit from Austin (Texas) Lake Travis, but leaves without having ever played a down for the Buckeyes. And though that assures sophomore transfer Justin Fields will be the starter heading into the 2019 season, the Buckeyes have just two scholarship quarterbacks on the roster moving forward (Fields and redshirt senior Chris Chugunov).

With that, we asked several members of the media to share their thoughts on Baldwin's decision:

Dave Biddle, Bucknuts

"I was certainly surprised when the news dropped. And I must be honest and say I think there was more at play than simply 'homesickness' for Baldwin. Does anyone actually believe that Baldwin would have put his name in the portal if he was told by head coach Ryan Day that he was the starter? So, playing time was definitely a factor here in my opinion, and I believe Baldwin felt he was always going to be behind Justin Fields on the depth chart, barring an injury to Fields.

"Baldwin is a classy kid and I don't fault him for not saying publicly that this has anything to do with playing time. Fans can be cruel and they would call him a quitter if he did that. I wish him well, and I bet he will do well at whatever program he selects."

Jeremy Birmingham, Lettermen Row

"I think the departure of Baldwin is further proof of how different the game of college football is going to be moving forward, but I also think it's a situation that is different than that of Tate Martell's, for example, because this isn't just about a kid that didn't want to risk sitting on the bench for two more years.

"Baldwin and his family expressed a desire to transfer behind closed doors before the start of spring football and there were discussions about it with the coaching staff but, despite the hope of retaining him, the desire to be closer to home and perhaps have a chance to play before 2021.

"Nothing changed on Ohio State's timeline for Baldwin: the plan was always for him to be the starter come 2021. If he'd be named the starter now, would he have left? Of course not, but he didn't leave just because he's not starting, that was more likely just the final piece of the puzzle."

Dan Hope, Eleven Warriors

"Baldwin's departure is unquestionably a big hit for Ohio State's quarterback depth, as it leaves the Buckeyes with little else behind sophomore Justin Fields. Ohio State was counting on Baldwin to stick around as the No. 2 quarterback this year; if anything happens to Fields, the Buckeyes will be in a tough spot, as they'll be hard-pressed to find a starting-caliber quarterback on the transfer market at this point.

"That said, it's hard to blame Baldwin for his decision: he faced the possibility of being Fields' backup for the next two years only to be Jack Miller's backup in 2021. With quarterback transfers becoming more commonplace in college football than they have ever been before, Ohio State (and other top teams) have to be prepared for situations like this to happen and adjust accordingly."

Andrew Lind, Buckeye Sports Bulletin

"I, too, was surprised by Baldwin's decision, as it comes just a few weeks after Day praised him for his loyalty to the program. No matter where he sat on the depth chart this fall, his loyalty would eventually be rewarded upon Field's departure in a few years — presumably following his junior season. That would give Baldwin two years to start, a situation somewhat similar to how he waited his turn at powerhouse Lake Travis.

"On the other hand, nothing is guaranteed in today's college football landscape. What's to say, in two years, another five-star transfer quarterback is on the market. Would Baldwin — who would be entering his fourth year in the program — be put in the same position as Tate Martell was this offseason when he was expecting to compete for the starting position only to have his world flipped upside down with Ohio State's addition of Fields? Not to mention, the Buckeyes are bringing in one of the nation's top-rated signal callers next recruiting cycle in Arizona four-star Jack Miller. There would surely be an open competition, rather than Baldwin being handed the spot ahead of the 2021 season.

"That said, I don't blame Baldwin for his decision, which is surely the combination of playing time and homesickness — not one or the other. If he can find a situation where playing time is readily available and it's closer to home, then it's an opportunity he has to take. I wish him nothing but the best, and I hope Ohio State fans will root for him in the same way they have Joe Burrow at LSU."

Patrick Murphy, Bucknuts

"Ohio State finds itself in a tricky spot seemingly out of nowhere. From having a wealth of talent at the quarterback position in recent years, the Buckeyes now leave spring practice with just two scholarship quarterbacks on the roster. It's unfair to blame Baldwin for his decision, as it is a similar one that landed the Buckeyes Justin Fields. Whether the decision was made due to homesickness or wanting a quicker path to playing time, this is the college football world we now live in.

"For Ohio State, it's now about acting fast. The Buckeyes must get another scholarship quarterback on the roster before the 2019 season, to have another body at the position if nothing else. Ideally, this is someone who could step in and play if Fields gets hurt but finding talent, and a player who can

competently learn the playbook by the fall, will be tough. This is a big moment for Ohio State and a situation the program hoped it wouldn't be in coming out of spring practice."

Tom Orr, The O-Zone

"Baldwin's transfer certainly didn't come as a shock. He fits the profile of the kind of quarterback who has transferred a lot recently— talented, far from home, and possibly stuck behind someone else for another season or two. Buckeye fans shouldn't begrudge him a chance to pursue another opportunity.

"Ohio State can paper over the holes for now with grad transfers. But longer-term, this may mean the Buckeyes need to take another look at their quarterback recruiting model. The days of 'one and only one guy every year' may be a relic of the past. Go ahead and chase that national four-star every year, but think about bringing in a three-star Ohio prospect as well. In the future, having consistent depth could be the difference between an okay season and a disaster. And you can't rely on 'one guy each year' to provide that any more."