

Reports: Former 5-Star QB Justin Fields To Explore Transfer From Georgia With Ohio State Among Possible Destinations



Should he pursue his transfer, Ohio State is considered among several possible destinations for Georgia freshman quarterback Justin Fields. According to multiple reports between Monday night and Tuesday morning, the former five-star prospect in the 2018 recruiting class from Kennesaw (Ga.) Harrison has informed the Bulldogs of his intent to explore other options with the Buckeyes in the mix. Dan Wolken of USA TODAY Sports first reported the news, followed by reports from ESPN's Mark Schlabach and The Blade's Kyle Rowland that confirmed the development and pegged OSU as a top suitor for Fields.

Ohio State is the favorite for Fields because of Ryan Day, Rowland reported Tuesday. The two-year offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach was named head coach Urban Meyer's successor Dec. 4, and has been spearheading the Buckeyes' recruiting efforts for the 2019 class and beyond with the early signing period running Wednesday through Friday. Meyer retires officially Jan. 1 after No. 6 OSU (12-1) faces No. 9 Washington (10-3) in the Rose Bowl at 5 p.m. ET, with Day slated to take over full-time duties Jan. 2.

On the surface, the connection between Ohio State and Fields stems from Day's development of sophomore Dwayne Haskins, in conjunction with ties to trainer Quincy Avery. Day did wonders with Haskins in 2018, molding the Buckeyes' first-year starter into one of the Heisman Trophy's three finalists. Haskins has gone 348 of 496 (70.2 percent) for 4,580 yards with 47 touchdowns to eight interceptions, adding 73 rushes for 122 yards and four touchdowns, in 13 games with one contest left as he mulls his early entry into the NFL draft.

Based in Atlanta, Avery has trained Haskins and Fields — sometimes together. Over the summer, Haskins posted photos to his Twitter account with Fields and Houston Texans quarterback Deshaun Watson. On July 24, he published pictures with the two signal callers and Avery from one of their sessions.

— Dwayne Haskins, Jr. (@dh_simba7) June 24, 2018

NCAA rules require transfers to sit a year out, but Fields intends to petition for immediate eligibility. According to Radi Nabulsi of Rivals, Fields' family is expected to retain Arkansas-based attorney Thomas Mars, who assisted in Michigan junior quarterback Shea Patterson's transfer process from Ole Miss last offseason. Mars declined to discuss specifics when asked by Rowland about his involvement with Fields.

"I've helped more than a dozen student-athletes from different sports in the past year, but I don't talk about it publicly unless there's a good reason to do so," he said.

Fields would also consider Florida State and Oklahoma, Schlabach reported Monday. Fields practiced Monday with Georgia and is expected to play for the No. 5 Bulldogs (11-2) against No. 15 Texas (9-4) in the Sugar Bowl at 8:45 p.m. ET on New Year's Day. While he may transfer out of UGA, Fields and his father have held multiple meetings with head coach Kirby Smart over the past few weeks about the quarterback's future.

"(Fields transferring) is a possibility, but we expect him to play in the Sugar Bowl," said Schlabach's source, who added Monday that Fields had not yet been placed in the NCAA's transfer portal, which notifies other schools of the student-athlete's interest to leave. "It's not done. He practiced (Monday) and practiced his ass off. He's going to explore what's out there. He might come back."

Earlier this fall, Georgia baseball player Adam Sasser allegedly made racially-bigoted comments directed to Fields after the Bulldogs' 38-12 win over Tennessee. Sasser, a senior first baseman, was dismissed from UGA's baseball program in an Oct. 3 announcement from its athletic department. According to Wolken, that situation "could be the foundation of Fields building a case to be eligible next year."

I am guessing the racist remark from the baseball player could be the foundation of Fields building a case to be eligible next year. Given how lenient the NCAA has been on waivers, I could see him playing in 2019 <https://t.co/6zXF9klrKF>

— Dan Wolken (@DanWolken) December 18, 2018

The 6-3, 225-pounder played in 12 games for UGA behind incumbent starter Jake Fromm (6-2, 220). Off the bench, Fields completed 27 of his 39 (69.2 percent) passes for 328 yards and four touchdowns. As a runner, he added 42 attempts for 266 yards (6.2 average).

In the scenario where Haskins leaves, three scholarship quarterbacks return from Ohio State's 2018 roster. Those include redshirt freshman Tate Martell (5-11, 210), freshman Matthew Baldwin (6-3, 205) and junior Chris Chugunov (6-1, 203). Martell, who flashed in six games off the bench as he went 23 of 28 (82.1 percent) for 269 yards and a touchdown with 22 rushes for 128 yards (5.8 average), has been considered the favorite to replace Haskins in 2019.

After he had surgery on his right ACL last January, upon arrival to Columbus for early enrollment from

Austin (Texas) Lake Travis, Baldwin did not appear in any of the Buckeyes' 13 games. But the former four-star recruit — rated the 247Sports composite's No. 331 overall prospect, No. 12 pro-style passer and No. 43 player in Texas for the 2018 recruiting class — figures to compete with Martell for OSU's potential opening.

Chugunov transferred from West Virginia in August as a graduate with two years of eligibility left. He made his Ohio State debut Sept. 8 in the Buckeyes' 52-3 rout of Rutgers, but he has not thrown a pass since his OSU arrival.

A pair of walk-on players, sophomore Kory Curtis (6-3, 228) and freshman Danny Vanatsky (6-2, 195), round out Ohio State's current quarterbacks. Oak Park, Mich., four-star Dwan Mathis — the 247Sports composite's No. 261 overall prospect, No. 9 pro-style passer and No. 7 player in Michigan for the 2019 recruiting class — has been committed to the Buckeyes since June 24 and is slated to sign Wednesday with OSU.

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— DwanM (@DwanM3) December 18, 2018

Fields enrolled early at Georgia last January to compete for the Bulldogs' starting job, but Smart kept the sophomore Fromm ahead. Fields played situationally in 2018, but majority of his snaps came in UGA's blowout wins. Perhaps the most memorable play he had came Dec. 1 against No. 1 Alabama (13-0) in the SEC title game, where then-No. 4 Georgia inserted Fields for its fake-punt attempt late in the contest, failing and leading to the Crimson Tide's go-ahead touchdown in the 35-28 final.

As a recruit, Fields originally committed to Penn State in December 2016. He announced his decommitment from the Nittany Lions in June 2017, however, flipping to the Bulldogs in October 2017 and signing early with UGA in December 2017. Fields was the 247Sports composite's No. 2 overall prospect, No. 1 dual-threat quarterback and No. 2 player in Georgia for the 2018 recruiting class.

Nationally and statewide, Fields finished behind only Cartersville five-star quarterback Trevor Lawrence (6-6, 215), the No. 1 pro-style passer. Lawrence enrolled early at Clemson last January and became the starting quarterback as a freshman, leading the No. 2 Tigers (13-0) to the College Football Playoff.

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