

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

With Burrow Gone, Buckeyes Are Haskins' Team

By RYAN McGLADE
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When Urban Meyer walked away from the lectern following Ohio State's spring game on April 14, the quarterback situation was still as foggy to the public as it was when spring practice began on March 5.

In his press conference immediately after the intra-squad scrimmage, Meyer said he and offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Ryan Day and offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson would meet in the week that followed to evaluate the spring as a whole and then meet with Joe Burrow, Dwayne Haskins and Tate Martell to give some kind of private assessment of where everybody stood.

Burrow, who graduated on May 6 with a degree in consumer and family financial services, provided clarity to the matter when he announced on May 8 that he was transferring from Ohio State. Ten days later, he revealed that was headed to LSU as a graduate transfer with two years of eligibility remaining.

Speaking at the Pro Football Hall of Fame Luncheon Club on May 14 in Canton, Ohio, Meyer confirmed what Burrow's transfer means: Haskins, who will be a third-year sophomore in the fall, is in position to be the Buckeyes' starting quarterback for the 2018 season.

"This is really the first time I've talked about this since the spring game, but as of now it looks like Dwayne Haskins will get the first opportunity to be the starter," Meyer said at the luncheon, according to The (Canton) Repository.

The head coach noted how Haskins took over for the injured J.T. Barrett in the third quarter of the game at Michigan last season with OSU trailing, 20-14, and led the team to a 31-20 victory. On Haskins' first drive of that game, he threaded a 27-yard pass between two Michigan defenders to Austin Mack to convert a third-and-13, which was set up because of back-to-back false start penalties. Two plays later, Haskins scampered for 22 yards before J.K. Dobbins punched it in from a yard out to give Ohio State the lead for good. Haskins (6-3, 218) finished the contest completing 6 of 7 passes for 94 yards with no touchdowns or interceptions while running three times for 24 yards.

"Dwayne is a young guy that came in against our rivals and did a heck of a job," Meyer said. "You go back and watch that again, he came in on the first drive and took us down the field and scored on that first drive against that defense. So he's got a great release, he's got good size and he's a mobile-enough quarterback. It is going to change how we attack defenses."



TIM MOODY

HIS TEAM – After competing with Joe Burrow and Tate Martell in spring practice, Dwayne Haskins (7) enters the summer as Ohio State's undisputed starting quarterback.

While Meyer talked about what Haskins will bring to the squad, he made sure at the luncheon to share his feelings toward Burrow, who broke a bone in his throwing hand during fall camp last year.

"He's a very good player," Meyer said of Burrow. "I love Joe. I love his family. He did everything the right way. I have nothing but good things to say about him. Joe and I are extremely close."

Haskins came to Ohio State as a four-star product out of Potomac (Md.) Bullis School, where he racked up 5,308 yards and 54 touchdowns in his high school career. He threw for 1,963 yards and 24 touchdowns as a junior in 2014, when he was named the Maryland Gatorade Player of the Year. He then completed 170 of 286 passes as a senior for 2,217 yards and 20 scores. The New Jersey native helped Bullis to consecutive Interstate Athletic Conference titles as a sophomore and junior.

Directly observing Haskins' development as a prepster, Bullis head coach Pat Cilito told BSB that Haskins has more than earned

his shot at being the starting signal caller for the Buckeyes.

"The kid deserves it," Cilito said. "He's one of the hardest-working kids that we've had come through here. I've never seen a kid so in-tune to football. I'm not going to say he's the hardest worker in the weight room or anything like that, but I've never seen a kid perfect his craft the way he has. He would leave practice, he would go throw in the indoor facility because he didn't like the way the ball was coming out. He didn't stop working until he had it down to where it was perfect throwing the ball."

Cilito said Haskins routinely returns to Bullis to work with the quarterbacks

currently playing for the high school or to throw with the receivers. In fact, Cilito said Haskins was back in town in early May for six days, three of which he spent working out with the quarterbacks.

Cilito said Haskins' latest visit is just an example of how much the student-athlete has grown over the years.

"The biggest change that I've seen over Dwayne in the last three or four years is his maturity level," Cilito said. "It just continues to grow and grow, and he gets more and more serious about it every time I see him. Since he was here, it was football and school. That was it. There were no distractions. You can just see he's got more focus now than he ever has."

TOPSOIL



VERY RICH PULVERIZED
OR UNPULVERIZED
"SOIL PLUS"

BLENDED SOIL WITH SAND and ORGANIC COMPOST
RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL
CRUSHED LIMESTONE, WASHED SAND & GRAVEL

ANY SIZE LOAD • IMMEDIATE DELIVERY ANYWHERE
Buy Where the Professionals Do • Delivered on Time - Every Time, It Doesn't Cost Any More!
Columbus' Largest

JONES FUEL COMPANY

350 Frank Road • 443-4611 • 1-800-TOPSOIL
www.jonestopsoil.com

Press

Pub + on 5th
GOOD FOOD • FINE DRINKS

Open for lunch daily!

1505 W. 5TH AVE.
NEAR GRANDVIEW AVE.
614-817-1198

MON - THU: 11:00 AM TO 11:30 PM
FRI - SAT: 11:00 AM TO 1:30 AM
SUN: NOON TO 11:30 PM
KITCHEN 'TIL 1/2 HOUR BEFORE CLOSE NIGHTLY

~ PRESSCOLUMBUS.COM ~

Press Grill

Voted one of
Columbus' Best
Places to Eat at
the Bar

good food
fine drinks

741 N. HIGH ST.
IN THE SHORT NORTH
614-298-1014

MON - SAT: 11:30 AM TO 2:30 AM
SUN: NOON TO 2:30 AM
KITCHEN 'TIL 1 AM NIGHTLY

Thoughts On Many Sides To OSU's QB Situation

Let me ramble a little bit about the Ohio State quarterback situation and Dwayne Haskins and Joe Burrow. Rambling is really all I can do because I have so many thoughts on this it is hard to organize.

First of all, Buckeye fans seems to fall into any number of camps when it comes to Haskins and Burrow.

There is the one group that decided, that fateful day last November when Haskins threaded that needle to Austin Mack to put the Buckeyes back on track to beat archrival Michigan, Haskins was their man. After four years of watching J.T. Barrett and what they perceived was – rightly or wrongly – a weak arm, they were ready for Haskins – the next Cardale Jones and the key to a wide-open, vertical offense.

There was another group that, in the limited look it had at Burrow and Haskins, was comfortable with either QB. Let them battle it out and may the best man win.

Then there were those who believed that losing Burrow was the worst thing to happen in Urban Meyer's tenure at Ohio State. A coach's son, Burrow was the best suited to run Meyer's offense. He offered the ideal combination of passing and running skills. And don't forget, his backers remind, he was Barrett's backup until injuring his hand, and who's to say he wouldn't have led the Buckeyes to victory over the hated Wolverines.

And there was the group that figured, if Burrow and Haskins were close in the competition, go with Burrow because Haskins' situation was such that he would be more likely to stay in Columbus if he didn't win the starting job, giving the Buckeyes a stacked quarterback room.

Which leads into the last group, those Buckeye fans who can't figure out why Burrow would take his talent elsewhere, even if he might never have a chance to start. This is Ohio State. If you were a player even on the scout team at OSU and had a chance to start at, say, an SEC power, surely you would stay in Columbus and get your brains beat out in practice every day just for the pride of being able to say you wore the scarlet and gray.

I guess I was/am among the group that was comfortable with either quarterback. Even with Haskins' performance against Michigan, I'm not sure we had seen enough of either QB to make an unequivocal choice. Nor, perhaps, had Meyer and his offensive brain trust. Don't forget there was also the Dwayne Haskins last year who telegraphed an ill-advised interception against UNLV that was returned 65 yards for a score. The two, for the most part, appeared equally talented and equally untested.

I know that some of you think that I am on the horn with Urban all the time and he shares with me the intimate details of the quarterback competition and the selection process. Unfortunately, that is not the case. I don't know that Meyer and Co. made a firm choice of Haskins after spring ball. They may have still considered the competition extremely close and wanted the battle to continue into fall camp.

For Burrow, that would be pretty much the same as choosing Haskins as the starter. If Burrow were going to move on, he had to do it sooner rather than later so that he could begin competing for the starting job at whatever school he chose – which was ultimately LSU.

Now I am of the school that says that Burrow took care of business, graduated from Ohio State, and earned the right to do whatever was best for him and his family. He determined that to be to move on. It's hard to argue against his choice. By virtue of his college degree he will always be a Buckeye. He never did anything

to embarrass Buckeye Nation, and we should wish him the best and be proud of what he accomplishes going forward. I hope he beats Alabama any chance he gets and hope, by luck of the postseason draw, he never faces Ohio State. Awkward!

Which brings up an interesting thought.

Haskins will still be competing with Burrow, even though the Athens, Ohio, product has moved on to the Bayou. Buckeye fans will be watching how their wandering quarterback does and comparing it with Haskins' play, each and every week. I personally hope they both do well. But if Burrow shines and Haskins struggles, Ohio State message boards, including ours at BuckeyeSports.com, will light up all across the Internet.

Burrow's departure has already started hand-wringing among the "glass half empty" group of Buckeye fans. All of the sudden, Ohio State is lacking in quarterback depth. Those who were looking forward to seeing special packages inserted specifically for the young Tate Martell back when the depth chart was loaded with quarterbacks are now suggesting that Meyer not play Martell for fear of him getting injured.

You can't coach that way.

You have to do what gives you the best chance of winning now. If changing things up and bringing Martell in for certain situations helps the Buckeyes win this season, then do it. Players can get injured in practice or even walking to class. You can't coach to prevent injuries. You coach to win.

And who's to say the Buckeyes don't have depth in the quarterback room? Who knew about Kenny Guiton before Braxton Miller got injured? Who knew about Barrett until Miller got injured? And who knew what Jones or Haskins could do until Barrett was knocked out of separate Michigan games? Freshman Matthew Baldwin needs to work hard and be ready. Players are recruited to Ohio State to play. Next man up.

There's one thing I do know, now that Haskins appears to be the chosen one. He is destined for mediocrity if the offensive coaching staff doesn't implement an offense that is built around Haskins and the assemblage of athletes around him. The Buckeyes have a strong-armed quarterback, a whole fleet of receivers eager to live up to their potential and two 1,000-yard running backs. If the quarterback ends up running the ball 30 times a game, I will scream and so too, I am sure, will many of you. And I doubt the Buckeyes will win the national championship.

Assuming the offensive line comes around, if allowed to this offense should be one of the best Buckeye units in recent years, with a nice mix of running and short and downfield passing.

I can't wait!

Finally, BSB editor emeritus Mark Rea had an interesting appearance on Louisiana sports legend Bobby Hebert's New Orleans radio show after Burrow announced his decision to attend LSU. While on hold before joining Hebert on the air, Rea listened as a giddy LSU fan noted that the SEC has had great success with transfers, pointing in particular to Cam Newton, who transferred from Florida via Blinn College to Auburn, where he won the 2010 Heisman Trophy.

When Mark took to the air with Hebert, the host wondered if Burrow had a mental aspect to the game similar to that of someone like Peyton Manning in terms of seeing the field, reading defenses and understanding the playbook. Mark reminded Hebert, who quarterbacked the New Orleans Saints to their first NFL playoff appearance, that Burrow, to date, had a limited body of work to evaluate, but assured the Cajun Cannon that if Burrow were already as good as Newton or Manning, he would be starting at Ohio State right now.

Dobbins For Heisman?

While out in Las Vegas each spring for the College Sports Publishers Association convention, I always pick up the odds sheets for teams to win the college football and basketball national championships. I found something a little different this year in addition to the traditional championship odds – odds to win the Heisman Trophy. With Vegas sports books ready to take action on virtually any proposition, I am sure these odds existed in the past, but I had never seen them on a futures sheet previously.

I first saw the Heisman sheet at a small sports book on the strip, William Hill. Ohio State's J.K. Dobbins opened on March 7 with 10-1 odds, third best behind Stanford's Bryce Love and Wisconsin's Jonathan Taylor at 8-1 each to win the Heisman. By my late May arrival in Vegas, Dobbins' chances had fallen to 11-1 and he trailed Love and Taylor, now at 7-1, and Tua Tagovailoa of Alabama at 10-1.

Vegas seems to believe Haskins also has a shot at the Heisman. He opened at 25-1 but has since dipped to 28-1. If you want to play a long shot, put a few bucks on Nick Bosa, who is a 100-1 shot to win the Heisman Trophy.

I later found a more well-known book's take on the Heisman action with MGM Resorts being less bullish on the Buckeyes.

Dobbins is listed at 15-1 behind Love (4-1); Taylor, Arizona's Khalil Tate and Georgia's Jake Fromm (6-1); and Tagovailoa and Jarrett Stidham of Auburn at 10-1. Penn State's Trace McSorley joins Dobbins at 15-1.

MGM has Haskins at 30-1 and Bosa at the same 100-1.

Personally, I think it will be hard for Dobbins to win the Heisman because he will be splitting carries with Mike Weber. In fact, Weber, not listed on either of the sheets I found, might be another long shot. Who's to say, if he gets off to a hot start, that he might not get more carries than Dobbins? I like Dobbins' chances better next year, when he will most likely have the bulk of the carries to himself.

As for the national championship, Meyer's Buckeyes opened in February at 6-1, tied with Clemson for the second-best odds behind Alabama's 5-2. The Tide was still at 5-2 upon my trip in late May, and the Buckeyes were grouped with Clemson and Georgia at 5-1. I raised an eyebrow over Michigan being next at 12-1. Jim Harbaugh seems to continually mesmerize experts and fans alike, even though I am not sure what part of his performance in Ann Arbor, so far, people find so impressive. Michigan's move to the fourth-best odds came at the expense of Penn State, which fell from 10-1 in February to 15-1 in late May in the odds posted by MGM Resorts.

Big Ten fans who are lottery-minded might consider placing a wager on Indiana or Rutgers, who have the worst odds of the 52 schools listed at 750-1. Indiana dropped from an opening of 400-1, while the Scarlet Knights have stayed consistent at 750-1.

As for basketball, Ohio State still has a long way to go in the eyes of the oddsmakers. The Buckeyes opened at 40-1 in April and were drawing the same odds in late May along with Butler, OSU coach Chris Holtmann's previous coaching outpost. Kansas and Duke led the way at 6-1, followed by Kentucky and defending champion Villanova at 10-1. Michigan State (18-1) and Michigan (20-1) had the best odds among Big Ten schools. Of the 119 schools with assigned odds, Rutgers again brings up the rear in a group with 1,000-1 odds to win it all. Among schools that Vegas deems having a better chance to win the national championship than Rutgers are St. Mary's (300-1), Harvard (400-1), Middle Tennessee State and Grand Canyon (500-1) and Northern Kentucky and Belmont (750-1).

As for the College Sports Publishers convention itself, survival seems to be the order of the day.

Publishers at Purdue and Michigan State recently stopped producing their print products entirely and are now online only. Such outlets as Michigan and Penn State still put out print products but had already scaled back to monthly publishing only.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin seems to be the only publisher among Big Ten schools committed to putting out a weekly print edition, supplemented by a 24/7 Internet product offered exclusively to its print subscribers.

Reaction to our new BuckeyeSports.com website has been extremely positive, and we are now in a position to offer up-to-the minute Ohio State sports news between print publishing dates. The print edition of BSB, however, remains our core product.

As for BuckeyeSports.com, we are especially excited about our new electronic fan forum, which allows BSB readers to interact with members of the BSB staff as well as Buckeye fans from around the world. In fact, the BuckeyeSports.com forum has allowed BSB readers to contribute content for the benefit of all readers as they post Buckeye items that they have found on their own.

As we like to say, we now have correspondents in all 50 states. If you see something relevant to Ohio State sports, be sure and post it on the forum. Our motto is the purloined, "If you see something, say something." This might include news on a prospective recruit or a former Buckeye in your area or just news of Big Ten or general interest.

And of course, if you have an opinion or just want to vent about Ohio State sports, now you have the place. If you disagree with a poster, tell Buckeye Nation why. If you have a question of a BSB staffer, ask it.

If you have not already signed up to enjoy BuckeyeSports.com, simply send your name, address and email address to subscriptions@buckeyesports.com. We will send back easy instructions on how to get to the site and to enjoy the full benefits of your Buckeye Sports Bulletin subscription.

We are confident that this combination of print and online coverage will keep Buckeye Sports Bulletin a viable product for Buckeye fans for years to come, and the competitive nature of our staff makes us proud of the fact that we are offering a more comprehensive product than such on-field rivals as Michigan, Michigan State and Penn State!