

Ryan Day And Jeff Hafley Preview Ohio State's Friday Night Game At Northwestern



After one week off, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day and co-defensive coordinator/secondary coach Jeff Hafley met with the media for roughly an hour on Monday morning. The press conference was moved up on day in preparation for Friday night's game at Northwestern (8:30 p.m. on FS1).

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

- Day said the open week gives the Buckeyes some time to heal up. "Like any team six, seven weeks into the season, there are some nagging injuries here and there."
- Day said they gave each of the players three different things to work on over the last week as part of their midseason self-evaluation. "The players have to understand we're not being overcritical."
- Day on Friday night football game at Northwestern: "I'm sure (high school coaches) don't appreciate it, but that's out of our hands, out of our control. Not much we can do about it."
- Day said the best thing about recruiting at Ohio State is pushing the on-field and off-field success. Cites the power of Ohio State's networking and large alumni base. "That really has opened a lot of doors for us."
- Day said he used to watch late Northwestern head coach Randy Walker and current Ohio State offensive coordinator/tight ends coach run the spread offense with the Wildcats when he was a player. Said his former head coach at New Hampshire, Chip Kelly, visited Northwestern to learn their offense.
- Day reiterates that the schedule is out of his hands and that he doesn't spend a lot of time thinking about it. "When the schedule comes out, we figure out where they're at and we'll go play them."
- Day said running back Demario McCall had some pregame issues that kept him out of Michigan State game. "That wasn't a coach's decision." Hopes he'll be back this Friday.
- "I do think, now more than ever, that guys are more ready to play," Day said of early-impact freshman. Four-game redshirt rule allows them to prove it. Added he was having conversations with director of player personnel Mark Pantoni about that just this morning.
- Day said they have conversations with younger cornerbacks, such as Cameron Brown, about how they're going to be the guy sooner rather than later. Buckeyes can potentially lose three cornerbacks (Damon Arnette, Jeff Okudah and Shaun Wade) to the NFL this offseason. The key is to practice and prepare with urgency, almost as if they're already the starter.
- On Brown specifically, Day said he's seen "a tremendous amount of growth" in the last 6-7

months.

- “You try to recruit the best available, the best players possible and you adjust the offense based on that,” Day said in response to a question about the use of the H-Back position this fall. Cites the increased use of a tight end in that role.
- Day said Jaelen Gill still needs to work his way up the depth chart to earn more playing time.
- Day on playing 1-4 Northwestern one week before a potential Top 5 matchup against Wisconsin. “We all know what happens when you lose focus.” Said the Buckeyes must have a white-belt mentality and not assume anything about the Wildcats.
- Day said they monitor the transfer portal, but do not hold a roster spot for any potential transfers.
- Day said Fields has been given most of the playbook and “he’s been able to handle it.” Adds he has a lot to work on. “There are a lot of things on film he needs to work on.”
- Day on difficulties of keeping four quarterbacks on the roster. “The way we develop quarterbacks here, a lot of guys are going to feel like they can go somewhere else and play.”
- Day on Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald: “Pat is as good a coach as there is in the country. That’s documented.”
- Speaking of Georgia’s loss to unranked South Carolina, Day noted how fragile success in college football can be: “It’s always out there as a reminder.”
- Day said the team is playing tough and they have good leadership, but they can still clean up some things and have more leaders.”

Co-defensive coordinator/secondary coach Jeff Hafley also met with the media:

- Hafley said there is a lot that goes into Shaun Wade’s position. “It helps that Shaun is really athletic, and he works really hard at it.”
- Hafley on Josh Proctor, who has earned more playing time in recent weeks. “Hopefully that will continue to happen. He’s done a good job.”
- “He’s really grown up. The way he practices, I wasn’t surprised by that,” Hafley said of Brown, who played the entire second half of the Michigan State game in place of Arnette. “He may have improved the most out of all the guys since we got here.”
- “He still has to get better — we all do,” Hafley said of NFL discussions with Wade. Noted we might see Wade playing on the outside, though he’s mostly played in the slot thus far.
- “We want to eliminate explosive (plays),” Hafley said, adding the goal is to make teams drive the entire length of the field. For example, the Buckeyes won’t blitz if it leaves them vulnerable on the back end.
- Hafley said he challenges the younger corners to push the upperclassmen, not just sit back and watch.
- “You’d like them to be game-ready, but it’s hard,” Hafley indirectly said of 2020 commits Lejond Cavazos, Clark Phillips and Ryan Watts as they look to potentially replace the Arnette, Okudah and Wade next fall. “Throw next year away. Hopefully we have a lot of football left.”
- Hafley on the three commits: “We feel all those guys are going to be special.”
- Hafley on defensive end Chase Young’s impact on the secondary: “It helps a lot ... When the defensive line gets after people, those deeper routes don’t exist.”