

Ryan Day Provides Updates On Offensive Line Battles



As spring camp has progressed, battles at three positions on Ohio State's offensive line have only heated up with everything coming to a head on Saturday at the Buckeyes' annual spring game.

Needing to fill holes left by All-American tackles Paris Johnson and Dawand Jones, as well as all-conference center Luke Wypler, the Ohio State offensive line has been rife with competition throughout the spring. With incumbent starters, Matthew Jones and Donovan Jackson entrenched in their guard spots, head coach Ryan Day is still searching for the answers to fill around the guard tandem.

"We're not crazy behind, but do I wish we were a little further ahead? Yes," Day said. "I think we have some work to do, that's for sure. But, they have gotten better. There have been really good plays, really good snaps and there have been great flashes in practices, but there's also been stuff that we have to get better at.

"I think it's probably the natural progression of where we are, but we always want to be moving along faster."

Right tackle and center have been the most contested positions this spring, while Josh Fryar has emerged as Ohio State's most likely option at left tackle. Fryar carries the most in-game experience for the Buckeyes outside of Jones and Jackson, and even notched a start at right guard last season after Jones missed OSU's 56-14 drubbing of Indiana on Nov. 12, 2022.

Despite Fryar's emergence at the position, Day still has pause with naming him the starter and noted that Fryar still has a way to go in regard to his progression.

"He's getting there, but I can't sit here and tell you he's got it locked down just yet," Day said. "Making the transition to left (tackle) is different. I think Josh certainly has the ability to do it, you can see it on film. But for him, it's just the consistency of doing it over and over again.

"It's very different when you're the starter and you have to do it over an extended period of time than just doing it once or twice," he continued. "He has the ability, he's shown he can do it this spring. If he can just increase the consistency then he will lock it down."

Moving to the middle of the line, an injury to senior Jakob James has held him out for the spring and has

opened the door for sophomore Carson Hinzman or Louisiana-Monroe transfer Victor Cutler to get a leg up in the competition for the starting center job. Hinzman has taking a good deal of the first-team reps in camp, while Cutler is adjusting to a new position after spending his time at tackle for the Warhawks.

While James will likely factor into the competition during the fall, offensive line coach Justin Frye noted that both Hinzman and Cutler have made solid progress during the spring.

"You never know how these guys are going to go until you let them go play the game," Frye said. "(Hinzman) has embraced it, he's won some and he's lost some, so he's got to learn from those. It's the same with Victor. Victor played tackle last year and we brought him in to be an inside guy. Adding that element of putting a ball in your hand and blocking the nose guard at Ohio State, there's some adjustment there. But, I think those guys that haven't really done a lot of it are biting into it."

Redshirt freshman Tegra Tshabola and redshirt junior Zen Michalski factor in at the right tackle competition, and while both have made progress this spring, Day noted that neither option has elevated himself above the other.

"There have been some good things, but we're not there or ready to name a starter right now," Day said. "I don't think either of those guys have stepped up, at left tackle too, I think there's been good things but to say that we're sitting right now and can say those are going to be the starters moving into the preseason, we can't do that."

"We'd like to say that, but we're not there. So there's a lot of work to be done here in the next few months."

The transfer portal also remains an option for Frye and Day, with the next portal window opening on April 15 and running through April 30. While Day said the Buckeyes haven't ruled out dipping into the portal, noting that there may be conversations about bringing in transfers in the coming weeks, he said that he still feels confident in the group that is currently assembled along the offensive line.

"We have to kind of go through and see how the (spring) game plays out and see how that looks on film, take the body of work, and then make some decisions from there," Day said. "It's a delicate situation, for sure. I think we believe in the guys that we have, otherwise we would say, 'Yeah, we have to bring in a guy.'"

"We believe in the guys, we know that they can do it. We're looking for more consistency," he continued. "I think Justin does a great job teaching technique, but they're going to have to do that here in the next couple of months."