Seven Buckeyes To Play In Super Bowl LVI

If a Columbus resident took a short drive down I-71 past the cornfields and a “Hell Is Real” sign, they would arrive in Cincinnati, Ohio — the official home of the Cincinnati Bengals.

The trip became familiar for more than one former Buckeye football player in their respective careers, including cornerback Eli Apple, safety Vonn Bell, defensive end Sam Hubbard and offensive lineman Isaiah Prince, who will all receive their chance to win a Super Bowl with the Bengals on Feb. 13.

In addition to those four Ohio State alums, quarterback Joe Burrow and linebacker Keandre Jones, who spent the 2016-18 seasons in Columbus before transferring to Maryland, will sport orange and black colors on Sunday evening.

Burrow’s status as a Buckeye has come into question in recent weeks, though the Heisman Trophy winner remains firm that he will always have a special connection to the university.

“I’m definitely still a Buckeye. I graduated from there,” Burrow said. “I still have relationships to this day that I wouldn’t have without being there. I’m still in contact with coach Mick (Marroti) and coach Ryan (Day) and Corey (Dennis), all those guys. I’m still a Buckeye.”

Day joined Ohio State in 2017 as the team’s co-offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach, instructing Burrow in his positional room.

The now-head coach said Burrow’s journey is unlike anything he’s seen. From Ohio State to the transfer portal, Louisiana State, and then the NFL, Burrow has made a name in football.

“His whole journey has been tremendous to be someone to watch and enjoy and cheer him on,” Day said.

This postseason, Cincinnati claimed its first playoff victory in 31 years, defeating the Oakland Raiders 26-19 in the NFL Wild Card Round. The Bengals then beat the No. 1-seeded Tennesee Titans and the defending AFC Champion Kansas City Chiefs to reach the Super Bowl.

“How exciting to come back to your home state and bring your team to a Super Bowl. I’m excited for them,” Day said. “I think they have a real chance to win that game. They’ve been underdogs the whole way.”

Burrow and Hubbard are the only former Buckeyes on the Bengals who are Ohio natives, hailing from

Athens and Cincinnati. Still, Bell said he also would consider the midwestern state his “home.”

“Looking back, I just meshed. It felt like home to me,” Bell said. “That was the biggest thing with coach (Luke) Fickell, coach Everett (Withers) that recruited me, coach (Urban) Meyer and coach (Kerry) Coombs. I just felt that.”

The Rams will make their second Super Bowl appearance in four seasons under coach Sean McVay In 2022. The Los Angeles-based team will have a slight home-field advantage as SoFi Stadium is their home stadium.

Former Buckeye safety Jordan Fuller is the only Ohio State alum on the Rams roster. However, he suffered an ankle injury in the team’s final regular-season game that will prohibit him from playing in the Super Bowl.

The Bengals and Rams will square off at 6:30 p.m. EST on Sunday at SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles. Cincinnati will wear black and orange jerseys with white pants, while Los Angeles will wear its bone gray and blue jerseys with the same-colored pants.