

What You Need To Know As Fall Camp Begins



The Ohio State football team is set to open its 2018 season at home on Sept. 1 when Oregon State visits Columbus. The Buckeyes, ranked No. 3 in the preseason coaches poll, will likely be heavy favorites in the game – but there are still a lot of questions that will likely be answered before Ohio State takes the field.

The biggest question, of course, regards the head coaching position. Urban Meyer, who has been the head man in Columbus for six seasons, was placed on paid administrative leave by the university Wednesday night as the school opened an investigation into allegations that Meyer knew about a domestic abuse incident regarding a then-assistant coach in 2015. With Meyer sidelined, offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Ryan Day is serving as the team's acting head coach.

On Thursday, the school announced an independent board to investigate the allegations, which center around the possibility of a Title IX violation, but for now, that's pretty much all anyone knows about Meyer's situation, and no timetable has been set for a final resolution.

But Meyer or no Meyer, that doesn't change the fact that Ohio State will be on the field for a regular season game in less than a month, and that means football is in the air.

Fall is here ????

Camp starts now ????

Let's get after it ????#GoBucks #WinTheMoment pic.twitter.com/G43ryVY4R2

— Ohio State Football (@OhioStateFB) August 3, 2018

On Friday morning, the Buckeyes – led by Day – were back on the practice fields at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center for the start of fall camp.

THE COACH

When Ohio State hits the field for practice No. 1 on Friday, it will mark Day's first practice as a head coach at any level, but that doesn't mean he's in completely over his head. Day has long been considered a rising super star in the coaching ranks, and had been touted as a potential future successor for Meyer - although most certainly expected that transition to come under drastically different circumstances.

Day was initially hired by Meyer ahead of the 2017 season as co-offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach, replacing Tim Beck. After the season Day was promoted to offensive coordinator and became one of the first two Ohio State assistants ever to receive a seven-figure salary. Day is set to make \$1 million in 2018 - the first year of a three-year contract, the longest of any OSU assistant - while defensive coordinator Greg Schiano will make \$1.5 million.

Day began his coaching career back in 2002 as the tight ends coach at his alma mater, New Hampshire, before taking a couple of graduate assistant jobs and spending two stints each at Temple and Boston College as an assistant coach. He eventually moved to the NFL ranks in 2015 to coach under his mentor, former Oregon head coach Chip Kelly, who is now the head man at UCLA. Day spent two seasons in the pros - one in Philadelphia and one in San Francisco - before making the move to Columbus.

THE QUARTERBACK

In addition to having a new head coach - at least for the start of fall camp, and maybe beyond that - the Buckeyes are breaking in a new quarterback. Third-year sophomore Dwayne Haskins is the man in Columbus now, replacing J.T. Barrett, who spent most of the last four seasons as the starting quarterback for Meyer.

Haskins wasn't recruited by Day, but he spent all of 2017 working with him as his position coach, and the signal caller from Maryland certainly took big strides. He competed with Joe Burrow for backup duties, and eventually led the Buckeyes to a thrilling, comeback win at Michigan in relief of an injured J.T. Barrett.

Haskins proved he can get it done in crunch time on that November day that he can get it done in crunch time, and now he has the reigns to the offense. It's time for him to prove that he can get it done over an entire season, and the Buckeyes - and their fans - certainly have high expectations.

Behind Haskins is redshirt freshman Tate Martell, a spark plug who will likely have a role in the offense, even as the backup, as well as freshman Matthew Baldwin, who could be one of the beneficiaries of the NCAA's new redshirt rule that allows student-athletes to appear in up to four games without losing that year of eligibility.

THE POSITION BATTLES

Quarterback was settled in the spring, and finalized when Burrow opted to transfer to LSU, but there are still plenty of spots up for grabs for the Buckeyes this fall.

Starting with the offense, Ohio State needs to replace two full-time starters along the offensive line, in

addition to figuring out who will start at right guard. At center, fifth-year senior Brady Taylor has a leg up heading into camp, but he'll be pushed by redshirt freshman Josh Myers and, potentially, junior left guard Michael Jordan, who has been touted as a potential option at center by Meyer.

The goal here will be to get the best five on the field, and if that means moving Jordan to center and having someone else take over at guard – maybe redshirt freshman Wyatt Davis or fifth-year senior Malcolm Pridgeon – so be it.

Ohio State is also replacing Jamarco Jones at left tackle, but that slot will in all likelihood be filled by sophomore Thayer Munford. The decision there will mostly center around whether or not Munford will play on the left or right, with senior Isaiah Prince the other tackle in the starting lineup.

The rest of the offense is mostly settled. J.K. Dobbins will likely be the starting running back while rotating with Mike Weber. All six receivers from last year's rotation are back, and they'll all play big minutes again. There is still a question at tight end, though, where sophomore Luke Farrell enters camp as the starter. He'll be pushed by junior Rashod Berry and freshman phenom Jeremy Ruckert.

Flipping to the defensive line, Dre'Mont Jones and Nick Bosa are guaranteed starting spots, and both are considered contenders for major national awards this year. At defensive end, Chase Young and Jonathon Cooper will be in the rotation, while players like junior Jashon Cornell and freshman Tyreke Smith will try to break into the lineup as well. At tackle, Jones is the No. 1 option, and he'll be a three-down player, while junior Robert Landers is the likely starter next to him. After that, there's a plethora of options in the rotation, including a couple of intriguing freshmen – Tommy Togiai and Taron Vincent.

The linebacker spots are up for grabs, for the most part, especially with Tuf Borland out for fall camp while he recovers from a spring Achilles injury. On the outside, Malik Harrison and Keandre Jones – both juniors – will be hoping to win starting spots while sophomore Baron Browning and junior Justin Hilliard will compete to start in place of Borland in the middle.

Younger players like sophomore Pete Werner and freshmen Teradja Mitchell and Dallas Gant, along with the veteran Dante Booker – a fifth-year senior – will have designs on a starting job as well.

At cornerback, the three-man rotation is expected to consist of Damon Arnette, Kendall Sheffield and Jeffrey Okudah, while Jordan Fuller is locked in as one of the starting safeties. Next to Fuller will be one of the fiercest battles of fall camp, with sophomores Isaiah Pryor, Jahsen Wint, Brendon White and Amir Riep battling to hold off freshman Josh Proctor.

INJURY CONCERNS

In the grand scheme of things, Ohio State is pretty healthy as fall camp begins. In the spring, a number of key players – including Okudah, Jordan, Booker and wide receiver K.J. Hill – were sidelined with injuries, but all of them are set to be 100 percent, or close to it, as camp begins.

Other than that, Borland is out for camp but is expected to make a September return to the lineup, while freshman wide receiver Kamryn Babb has a torn ACL and will likely miss the season.

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