

# Bjork Ready To Lead Ohio State Athletics Into Uncertain Future



Now that Gene Smith has officially retired, Ross Bjork has begun his tenure as the athletics director at Ohio State on July 1.

Bjork will be tasked with leading Ohio State through the ever-changing landscape that college sports has been recently, and looks to continue to be moving forward. He said that he's ready to take that task on and thinks Ohio State is ready for the changes coming.

"We want all of our sports to drive at the highest level, but the expectations and the funding model is now going to shift in a very, very dramatic way," Bjork told BSB. "If we don't adapt to that, then we're not doing our job. The old saying, if you don't like change, you'll like being irrelevant even less. So we better change or we're going to be irrelevant. That's going to be our job is to make sure that we change."

One big change that Bjork talked about was revenue sharing, which is coming to college sports at the beginning of the 2025 school year, and he has already talked about how he intends to pay Buckeye student-athletes the maximum amount allowed. One other possible change is the expansion of conferences, and what they might look like in the future as well.

"We need to solve the Division I governance, and then we need to solve the FBS governance," Bjork said. "We have 130 FBS programs, and there's a disparity. You've heard some of the Group of Five folks talk about, they should have their own playoffs, or how do they have their own identity? To me, there's a place for everybody."

"The second layer to that is media rights, TV contracts," Bjork added. "How do the biggest brands coalesce around media agreements. Right now, that's not possible. The Big Ten has a contract. The SEC has a contract. I think it will be fascinating to see what happens with the ACC with some of those institutions pushing back on their grant of rights. We know when the Big Ten contract runs out. We know when the SEC contract with ESPN expires. I think it will be fascinating to see what happens in the next eight to 12 years around media value of our television agreements."

Bjork has been at Ohio State since March in an advisory role, and he said that he spent that time trying to learn as much as he possibly could about the job from Smith since he did the job for 19 years, and trying to get to know everyone at Ohio State.

“I’ve really been intentional about honoring and giving deference to Gene,” Bjork said. “The best thing I can do when I take over is get to know the people in place. If I do that effectively, then I think I’ll be more effective when I do start understanding more things, casting a vision, putting together operational plans and tweaking things that things that may need tweaking or adjusting along the way. I think I’ll be better equipped because of the way we’ve done this transition.”