

Buckeyes Preparing For LB Room Without Gaoteote



It's been a difficult offseason for Ohio State linebacker Palaie Gaoteote. The former blue-chip recruit - who signed with USC out of Las Vegas Bishop Gorman and contributed there for three seasons before an injury derailed his tenure - has been waiting on a ruling from the NCAA regarding his eligibility for more than two months after transferring to Ohio State in early July.

And as the Buckeyes approach their season opener, a road bout with Minnesota on Sept. 2, Gaoteote and his new team are still without any answers.

"No, unfortunately, we don't (have an update)" Day said when asked about Gaoteote. "The NCAA asked for some additional information. I guess they are still working it over. But unfortunately, we don't have any more information even as we're headed into the game here. It's a difficult spot for him and us as we're waiting to hear the decision but we're still optimistic that we get good news."

Gaoteote is in a uniquely difficult spot, being asked to pay his own way at Ohio State as the team awaits an NCAA decision on his eligibility - with the circumstances regarding any potential eligibility issues remaining largely a mystery to the public as all other first-time transfers have been granted immediate eligibility, per a new NCAA rule. If approved, Gaoteote has been working out with the Buckeyes and would presumably become an immediate member of a shaky linebacker rotation. If not, though, the class of 2018 standout would be without an obvious path forward.

"We're patiently waiting because that affects a lot. If he is eligible, then he has an opportunity to be on scholarship," Day said. "If he isn't, then he has to figure out what the next step for him is."

With or without the USC transfer, though, Day is comfortable in Ohio State's options at linebacker, even if the hard-hitting senior would provide some much-needed stability to a position without any starting experience on the board entering game one.

"I feel good about Tommy Eichenberg, I feel good about Teradja (Mitchell), Dallas (Gant), Cody Simon, Steele Chambers is gonna get in there, K'Vaughan Pope will be in some different spots," Day said. "We have some depth there. But those guys have to go in there and play and produce because they have some big shoes to fill."