

Coordinator Corner: How Has Ohio State Secondary Shaped Up Under New Coaches Jeff Hafley, Matt Barnes?



Ryan Day wasted no time overhauling Ohio State’s defense when he took over his post officially as head coach, moving quick with hires of co-defensive coordinator/secondary coach Jeff Hafley and special teams coordinator/assistant secondary coach Matt Barnes among the moves in January.

Since the Buckeyes started spring camp March 6, co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison and linebackers coach Al Washington have been monitoring the linebackers in the front seven with defensive line coach Larry Johnson.

Among the tweaks in the defensive scheme, Mattison and Hafley have worked to implement OSU’s hybrid safety/linebacker “bullet” position.

Seven practices into spring camp after Wednesday’s drills at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, what type of changes has defense started to see on its back end?

Hafley delves deeper into the “bullet” position with insight into use of safeties, Barnes speaks on operations in the defensive backfield beside Hafley and more from the two new coaches as secondary changes continue.

Jeff Hafley

On using the safeties with tweaks among the defensive backfield...

“It’s pretty multiple. Free safety, strong safety, ‘bullet’ — we’re kind of rotating all the guys through those spots right now. Sometimes you’ll see them in the middle of the field, sometimes you’ll see them

in the half, sometimes you'll see them down in the box, sometimes you'll see them lined up over the slot. So really all three of those guys are pretty versatile. So you can take any safety in our room right now and we're trying to make it so we can plug and play them at all of those positions. So we don't just say, 'You're this.' The more multiple we can be, the more we can do on defense."

Matt Barnes

On working with Hafley between cornerbacks and safeties...

"So I kind of just play off of Coach Hafley. He takes the lead and I mentioned that several weeks back that anytime you've got too many voices in the secondary, that can create issues. So Coach Hafley's as good as I've been around at any position. I mean, he's a mastermind in the secondary. So a great opportunity for me to continue to build my skills there and we're just kind of playing off each other. I may be period to period even at practice — he may have the corners at one period and then I'll take them the next, just playing off each other."

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