

Early Evaluations Of Hartline's Playcalling Begin



Prognosticating how successful an offense with plays called by new coordinator Brian Hartline could be is a difficult task at this point in the year, even for Hartline's head coach Ryan Day.

Day has previously discussed and considered taking a step back from playcalling duties following Ohio State's loss to Georgia in the College Football Playoff Dec. 31, after having dialed up the offense in each of his first four seasons as the Buckeyes' head man. If he is to delegate that duty, however, he needs to trust that Hartline — who's proven his mettle as arguably the best wide receivers coach in the country — will be up to snuff dialing up an offense for the first time in his career.

Spring practice will be a chance for Hartline to showcase his abilities in that area. Even if it won't provide the same feedback as when Ohio State takes the field against Indiana Sept. 2.

"You don't really know until you get into a game how that works," Day said. "But we're going to try these next couple weeks to get some game-type situations and get that going. But a big part of that right now in the first 10 practices is installing, is fundamentals. Then we start trying to play the game more."

When Day refers to "game-type situations," it's almost replaceable with the term situational football. Calls when it's most important for a coordinator to be at his best, when an offense needs to come through at moments that can swing a contest.

"When you don't have redzone and third down, short yardage, those types of situations (installed), it's hard to get into those game situations," Day said. "So we'll typically script a lot of what we do, and we're only into day three here. Today was our first day in pads coming off of spring break. We've been pretty basic, we're really working on fundamentals. Hand placement, pad level, those types of things."

Hartline, meanwhile, is gleaning everything he can from the coaches around him and maximizing the

playbook that is handed to him. He gave some insight into what his style of coordination might look like March 10.

“It’s like playing Madden, I guess,” Hartline said of calling plays in spring. “The more I can continue to be involved and grow, I’m excited about that. That’s kind of been the whole path through sports, sports in general. But we’ll see how it all plays out.”

“I’m not really the type to just draw thousands of plays,” Hartline said. “That’s not where I’m at, that’s not how my brain works. The things we do, I want to do them at a very, very high level with extreme efficiency and provide as much advantage to the players as possible based on the plays. That’s kind of how my brain operates.”

Saturday should provide a good opportunity to evaluate Hartline’s ability on the headset.

The Buckeyes will be playing a full intrasquad scrimmage that day, the first for the 2023 team. Day indicated Tuesday that his new OC will get a shot to run the offense during the clash.

“We haven’t talked about it, but yeah, probably,” Day said. “We’ll put a little gameplan together, let him call it and see how it goes.”

Overall, however, Hartline’s evaluation is an ongoing process and the solidification of his exact role in gameplanning and playcalling won’t occur until the fall.

“As we get into more situational stuff, then we have our full gameplan and we can get into that stuff,” Day said. “The best you can do is just get out there and call it and see what happens. You try to change a situation the best you can, but you don’t really get a feel for it until you’re in a game.”