

Freshman Quarterback Lincoln Kienholz Turning Heads In Short Time On Campus



The biggest question facing Ohio State's quarterbacks room is who will ultimately wind up as the starter between Kyle McCord and Devin Brown. But the signal callers offer plenty of intrigue as well beyond the two competitors vying to be under center on Sept. 2 at Indiana.

Freshman quarterback Lincoln Kienholz, who has only been on campus for a couple of months as he begins his career, is already making waves with how he has handled himself since arriving in Columbus.

"He's done a great job just coming in and getting thrown to the wolves a little bit this summer with Coach Mick in the weight room," head coach Ryan Day said, "and trying to figure out how to take a snap with the guys out there when they're out there working and throwing on their own, but he's doing a good job."

Kienholz was a relatively late addition to Ohio State's most recent recruiting class, flipping to the Buckeyes from Washington just weeks before the Early Signing Period began. He was the No. 190 overall prospect and No. 15 quarterback in the class, but perhaps most notable was his status as the top-ranked recruit out of South Dakota.

During his high school career at T.F. Riggs in Pierre, S.D., Kienholz finished as the the state's all-time passing leader, throwing for over 9,000 yards and rushing for 3,500 more and accounting for 148 total touchdowns across four seasons. He was named MaxPreps South Dakota High School Player of the Year and earned honors in his team's classification, named 11AA Player of the Year.

Beyond his football accomplishments, he also had impressive junior seasons in baseball, boasting a 1.24 ERA and batting .472 as a junior, and basketball, earning an all-state basketball honor after averaging 19.9 points, 7.3 rebounds and 2.8 assists per game. Along with his football accolades, Kienholz was also named USA Today's Boys Athlete of the Year, recognizing his multi-sport ability.

While Kienholz did not receive the attention of other high-profile quarterbacks during his recruitment, with some pointing to a lack of strong competition in South Dakota, there have been no concerns thus far about Kienholz fitting in since he got to Columbus.

"Lincoln's a hard worker," quarterback Tristan Gebbia said. "He puts his head down and he just goes to

work. I think that he's picked up the system pretty fast. Smart kid, very athletic, obviously, that's a big draw to him. I think that he's just been improving every day, and I think that he does a good job in the weight room and guys are already starting to respect him, so I'm excited for his future, for sure."

Kienholz got his first taste of practice at Ohio State last week, going third in drills behind McCord and Brown. While it was up-and-down, as would be expected for a freshman in their first practice with the Buckeyes, he still showed signs of why his coaches have high expectations for the four-star prospect.

It's unlikely that he will see the field in any significant capacity this season, but as he continues to grow at Ohio State, Day said he offers some versatility when taking the field for practice.

"I think he can really help us, especially with some of the quarterbacks we see that are more athletic," Day said. "It's one thing to go through a drill with a quarterback that maybe can't disconnect, but when you're reading a defensive end or you're scrambling or those type of things, to have somebody who really can mimic what the other quarterback's going to do, that's really good. It's different. The guys in the back end have to cover a little longer, the guys have to pursue a little bit more, and you have a caged pocket a little bit, so all those things I think Lincoln can do.

"Who knows, I'm not going to put a limit on what's going to happen this year, but if it plays out the way we think it might, Lincoln will have a great opportunity to go against our defense and grow and learn," Day continued. "But I'll be surprised if he also doesn't have a chance to get in a game this year and get his feet wet, so we'll see. I think that's going to be a weapon for us."