

Frye Looking For “Eight (Or) Nine” To Feel Comfortable With Offensive Line Depth



Outside of Ohio State’s reworked defense and the installation of defensive coordinator Jim Knowles’ new scheme, the chief most concern for head coach Ryan Day was the team’s depth on the offensive line coming out of the spring.

“We do need to get more depth on the offensive line, that’s for sure,” Day said in April. “I feel pretty good about five, six guys, but we need to get to seven, eight, nine, which was a strength for us the last couple years.”

From left to right, the expectation is that the offensive line will feature junior Paris Johnson Jr., sophomore Donovan Jackson, sophomore Luke Wypler, fifth-year senior Matthew Jones and senior Dawand Jones.

“It helps having experienced guys because then - you’re never going to skip a step,” offensive line coach Justin Frye said earlier this month. “You’re going to install phase one, and then two and three and four, but as you’re going through that, you may progress a little faster. So, I think it’s just a comfort for those guys.”

Among the expected starters, only Johnson, Wypler and Jones are returning starters, and Johnson is being moved to the outside after starting at guard last season.

“He’s a highly skilled guy,” Frye said of Johnson’s first-round potential. “He’s going to blow the combine out of the water and he’s going to test well, he’s going to jump well, he’s going to do the interview phase well. He’s a high-level player, we’re just going to get him there to play that way.”

The starters are likely set in stone, but outside of that five, though? Questions abound.

Presumed backups include redshirt sophomore Jakob James at center, redshirt junior Enokk Vimahi as a flex at either guard position and redshirt sophomore as a flex at the tackle spots. Other than that, it’s anyone’s guess as to who might fill in if injuries on the offensive line were to compound, especially at tackle.

“We had the chance for a lot of guys (getting reps because of) guys getting banged up or nicked up a little bit, which was good,” Frye said. “Enokk was inside, took some reps on both sides. We had the chance to see Jakob James get a bunch of reps, which was good. You miss Josh (Fryar) a little bit in the spring, but that’s all you do – just keep developing the guys that are around. We’ve get through fall camp and then you shake it out and hopefully have eight, nine guys you feel comfortable with.”

Few names have presented themselves other than the ones listed above, but it provides an opportunity for the younger members of the team to step up and with for positioning on the depth chart.

This includes those entering their sophomore or redshirt freshmen seasons, including Zen Michalski, Trey Leroux, Ben Christman or Grant Toutant, as well as the incoming freshman that could look to make a splash like George Fitzpatrick. Frye will be looking for those contributors throughout the summer and into fall camp, but until he settles on those options, depth on the offensive line remains a work in progress.