

Greg's Gauge: Don't Panic, The Buckeyes Can Survive Without McLaughlin



It was revealed late on Tuesday that Ohio State's center, Seth McLaughlin would miss the rest of the season with an injured Achilles. He had been one of the Buckeyes biggest impact transfers this season, helping turn around what was a struggling offensive line last season into one of the best in the country in 2024 with both his play and his leadership.

He's the second starting lineman who the Buckeyes are without for the rest of the season with left tackle Josh Simmons having been out since OSU went to Oregon.

I won't minimize the impact that McLaughlin - who was likely in line to be a finalist for the Rimington Trophy - had on the team this year. He was a major part of a great offensive line that already had to shuffle around after Simmons' injury, finding a configuration that worked with Donovan Jackson moving to left tackle and Carson Hinzman slotting in at left guard.

His voice in the locker room, and his ability to adjust to different defensive looks on the line have been invaluable to the Buckeyes offense, and it might take an adjustment period for Ohio State to get past losing him, a period that will have to be extremely short since No. 5 Indiana comes to town this Saturday with Michigan the following weekend.

However, Hinzman has shown his improvements this season and has been part of this great line for multiple games now. He has been learning from McLaughlin this season, and has 12 games of experience playing at the center position.

We won't know who the Buckeyes will slot in at center and left guard until they take the field on Saturday against the Hoosiers, but it seems like the Buckeyes might be better equipped to handle this loss than they were when Simmons was hurt. Ultimately, Jackson sliding to left tackle and proving he can play well on the outside worked extremely well for the Buckeyes.

Now they have players who have game experience ready to go. Hinzman could slide to center and Austin Sierieveld can slot in at left guard with Jackson sticking at left tackle. Will that group be as good as Josh Simmons and Seth McLaughlin would make it? No, but it absolutely can be good enough for the remainder of the season.

If any team is equipped to deal with losing 40 percent of its starting offensive line, its this Buckeyes team that has proven there is some depth at the position when that was a question coming into the year, and credit has to be given to Justin Frye for that improvement.

The offense has so many talented players at skill positions that it will be able to adjust, and while there could be times the run game might not look *asefficient*, or Will Howard has to get the ball out slightly quicker, I don't believe this injury ends the Buckeyes season.