

J.K. Dobbins On Ryan Day: 'He's Going To Be A Legendary Head Coach'

As head coach Urban Meyer hands Ohio State off to offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Ryan Day, count running back J.K. Dobbins among the Buckeyes who believe much of the blueprint in place will stay the same.

While the reaction to Meyer's retirement and Day's replacement Dec. 4 was mixed, in terms of those who were caught off guard and others who expected an announcement, the expectations for OSU's new head coach have been same from players on both sides of the ball.

Dobbins came to Columbus when Day did, with both joining the team for the spring of 2017. Now a sophomore, Dobbins has spent the past two seasons around Day, whose offensive influence has grown exponentially. Going on year three soon, Dobbins described Day's potential bluntly.

"I don't think much will change at all," Dobbins said Wednesday from the indoor field of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. "He's a winner. I'm excited for him. We have a great relationship and I can't wait to see what he can do. He's going to be a legendary head coach."

Day led Ohio State to its 3-0 start in September, acting as head coach in the wake of the university's independent investigation involving Meyer during fall training camp in August. Offensive coordinator/tight ends coach Kevin Wilson and defensive coordinator Greg Schiano played pivotal roles as well, but Day stepped up at the top.

"I'm excited because he's going to be a great coach," Dobbins said of Day. "You all got a glimpse of that in the first three games of the season. And you'll see more of it."

On the trail, Day's transition to the top has already begun. While the Buckeyes have been working around the clock to keep their 2019 class together — they have kept all commitments aboard and added another last Thursday, upping to 16 members ahead of the Dec. 19-21 early signing period — Day's duties doubled between recruiting all over the country and coming back to Columbus for practices as the Jan. 1 Rose Bowl against No. 9 Washington (10-3) awaits for No. 6 OSU (12-1).

"He's an energetic guy," Dobbins said of Day. "He bonds with the young people and he's great. I love him."

Closest to Tony Alford, Dobbins leaned on his running backs coach as he developed over the past two years into one of college football's most dynamic playmakers. The 5-10, 214-pounder has followed his freshman campaign — 194 rushes for 1,403 yards (7.2 average) and seven touchdowns on top of 22 receptions for 135 yards (6.1 average) and a touchdown in 14 games — with 223 carries for 1,029 yards (4.6 per) and nine scores in addition to 23 catches for 248 yards (10.8 per) and two scores in 13 contests.

"We're much more of a drop-back team," Alford said Oct. 2. "We're throwing the ball. ... We're much more of a drop-back team when people are rushing the passer, so screens come to life."

Despite splitting touches with junior running back Mike Weber (5-10, 214), who complemented Ohio State's two-headed attack on the ground with 157 totes for 858 yards (5.5 average) and five touchdowns, Dobbins evolved in Day's offense with one game left. Day took note of Dobbins' development next to Weber in November.

"They're running hard, their pad level's down," Day said Nov. 15. "I think that might have been as hard as they've run, (against the) No. 1 rush defense in America (in the Buckeyes' 26-6 win at Michigan State on Nov. 10). We did a good job of blocking (defenders), but there's always going to be an extra guy there. That's the way the run game is. We made them miss some and we've also run some guys over. Late in the game, we turn four-yard runs into six-yard runs."

As the offense steadily climbs on its upward trajectory under Day's play calling and head coaching, Dobbins sees significant improvement with room for more as a junior in 2019. With the blueprint in place from Meyer, OSU's culture continues as Day's acumen and leadership take the wheel.

"He understands developing us as men, football players and he is a winner," Dobbins said of Meyer. "He just knows how to become a winner and not accepting losing. That's a big part."

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