

Kienholz An Important Addition For OSU



With each passing year the policy of Ohio State head coach Ryan Day to take a quarterback each recruiting cycle appears increasingly intelligent.

The transfer portal and NIL have created a yearly quarterback carousel heretofore unseen in the ranks of college football. Among the schools who brought in new starting signal callers from the transfer market ahead of the 2022 season were such powerhouses as Oklahoma, Texas, Texas A&M, USC, Pitt, South Carolina, Oregon, West Virginia, Kansas State and Ole Miss.

A similar roller coaster unfolded in the Buckeyes' search for a quarterback in their 2023 class, with unexpected uncertainty in the class of 2024 only adding to the calamity in the end. But the Scarlet and Gray found their man in the 11th hour when Pierre (S.D.) T.F. Riggs four-star Lincoln Kienholz flipped from Washington to Ohio State one week before early signing day.

"If you took the last four or five years in the quarterback room, you could probably do a story on the whole thing," Day said. "At one point when we had four guys in there, somebody said, 'Well, this is going to be a big challenge.' The challenge is when you don't have anybody to put on the field. We always just do the best we can, year-in and year-out, to find the right quarterbacks for that room. And then know that, there's going to be a starter, there's going to be a backup and then there's going to be another backup. Hopefully you can have three guys, at least."

Kienholz is rated the No. 205 overall prospect in the 247Sports composite, the 14th-best quarterback and top player from South Dakota. He was The Mount Rushmore State's Maxpreps Player of the Year in 2022, passing for 3,422 yards and 46 touchdowns with just six interceptions. He added 1,436 rushing yards and scored 24 times on the ground, making for 70 total touchdowns in just 12 games.

His achievements on the baseball diamond and basketball court nearly equal his feats on the gridiron as well. Kienholz was an All-State selection in basketball averaging 19.9 points per game as a junior, while batting .472 with six home runs for the Governors' ball and stick club. He pitched too, of course, dominating opposing hitters to the tune of a 1.24 ERA. His competitive drive was a huge draw for Day.

"Multiple-sport athlete, and a very good multiple-sport athlete," Day said. "Played multiple sports but played them very, very well. (I) like the way he competed, like his athleticism. Liked his makeup when he came to visit us. Came here, saw the environment and (he's) like, 'I want this.' And that's a huge part of it."

Kienholz wasn't the first quarterback to lay claim to a spot in the class of 2023 for OSU, however.

Memphis Lausanne Collegiate School three-star Brock Glenn issued a verbal pledge to the Buckeyes July 30, seemingly wrapping up the team's recruiting at the position for the cycle. Most fans viewed Glenn as a stopgap and depth piece long term, with Chandler, Ariz. five-star Dylan Raiola — not just the No. 1 quarterback but the unanimous No. 1 overall player in 2024 — having committed to Ohio State two months prior.

Glenn decommitted from the Buckeyes Nov. 21. Raiola, in a much bigger surprise, did the same Dec. 17, three days after Kienholz flipped from the Huskies. Securing Kienholz became a much bigger necessity in hindsight.

Day couldn't comment on the Raiola or Glenn recruitments, since neither signed with the team, but the timing of trying to hold onto quarterback commitments in these tumultuous days was something he did touch on.

"It's something we always look at, 'When is the right time to go on quarterbacks?' Is it early in the process? Is it late? There's certainly some great positives to jumping on somebody early," Day said. "You identify who that person is early on. But when you get on somebody late like Lincoln, you get to recognize what they did their senior year. Same thing with C.J. (Stroud), same thing with Devin (Brown), and you get four years of work there (to evaluate).

It's unclear as of yet whether Keinhholz will enroll early. Regardless, especially if either Kyle McCord or Brown transfers this year pending the result of their quarterback battle, getting him in the fold was undeniably important for Ohio State moving forward.