

Malik Hartford Among Five Buckeyes Unavailable For Spring Practice



Ohio State head coach Ryan Day reported a mostly clean bill of health on Tuesday as spring practice began, with only five Buckeyes expected to be unavailable for the spring.

That list of unavailable Buckeyes includes sophomore safety Malik Hartford, freshman linebacker Payton Pierce, redshirt freshman offensive lineman Miles Walker, freshman cornerback Bryce West and graduate linebacker Kourt Williams II, though none are expected to be long-term injuries.

“It’s fair to say that we would expect all those guys back in the preseason,” Day said. “But they just won’t be participating in the spring. Everybody else - there will be a couple guys maybe that are limited, but everybody else will be able to go.”

Hartford is the most significant loss for the spring, as he started a game last season and finished with 10 tackles and two pass breakups. While Hartford was eyeing a starting job entering this season after the departure of Josh Proctor at free safety, that role is expected to be filled by transfer Caleb Downs.

Williams is the only other unavailable Buckeye who has played thus far in his career, though he is continuing to recover from an ACL injury during last year’s fall camp that forced him to miss the entire season. His career at Ohio State has been hampered by injuries, as the former team captain has appeared in just 17 career games.

Walker did not see the field as a freshman, and likely would only factor in on the third-team offensive line, while West and Pierce - the latter recovering from an injury suffered during his senior season of high school - are early enrollees who will miss their first spring with the Buckeyes.