

My Thoughts: The Quarterback Battle Needs To Be Decided As Soon As Possible



When the spring started there was some expectation that one of the five quarterbacks in the room at Ohio State would separate themselves from the rest of the pack, but 15 practices later there might be even less of an answer than there was before.

After Will Howard transferred in, Devin Brown made it clear that he would be staying to try to win the job because he felt that he hadn't really gotten a chance since he had been injured every time he got onto the field for an extended period of time. He certainly has made it a competition at the position for the second straight season.

The battle between Brown and Kyle McCord last season lasted into the regular season with Ryan Day not officially declaring a starter until after Week 2. Of course McCord had the upper hand, and that's why he was on the field for the first snap of the season and Brown got almost no time in the Week 1 win over Indiana, but he was still presumably taking snaps away from McCord in practice.

Whether it will last that long this year is yet to be seen, but neither Day or Chip Kelly seem to publicly lean one way or the other right now, which will last at least until they're able to see them in practices again at fall camp.

"They're really, from a football standpoint, on their own until August," Kelly said after the spring game. "You always want to (name a starter) earlier, but I also believe every time I've been involved in this, it kind of happens organically and authentically, because the players know... But I can't give you an exact timetable on that."

With the spring transfer portal opening on April 16, the issue might resolve itself with one of the quarterbacks transferring away, but if that doesn't happen, it could be another battle that lasts at least deep into fall camp if not later since neither Howard or Brown has separated themselves from the other with their play yet.

In the spring game, Howard was the first quarterback on the field with the starters, and he finished the game completing 9 of 13 throws for 77 yards and no scores. Brown did throw the only passing touchdown of the game, but his 5 of 7 for 66 yards wasn't overly impressive either since most of it was short passes.

The wind was blowing hard at the spring game, and that itself made it so throwing the deep ball would have been risky, especially with the Buckeyes' talent in the secondary, but that made it so not much could be taken away from the game.

In practices the media was able to watch, Howard did struggle to complete deep passes a little more than Brown did, and that could be due to a number of different reasons but his multiple shots at the endzone falling incomplete didn't help to ease the minds of Buckeye fans who might have seen that.

I believe there is value in knowing early on who is going to be leading the team on the field, not just for the quarterback himself, but for the rest of the team as well. The lack of a decision seems like a lack of confidence in what the two quarterbacks can do from the outside looking in, and whether that is the case or not, it's the message that is felt, at least by me.

One thing that was clear in the game was that at least Howard and Brown are the two frontrunners in the competition. When Day said in a press conference the week leading up to the game that true freshman Julian Sayin was still in the mix for the spot, it muddied the waters further slightly. If that were truly the case, Sayin either would have to be such a great talent that just one semester into his college career he might be ready to lead a top program on a hopeful national championship run - which would be tough to expect from any quarterback that age no matter the talent - or Howard and Brown weren't even separating themselves from the group behind them in practice.

Sayin was very good in spring practices when the media was able to watch, and he showed flashes of talent that will make him a great quarterback, but he also wasn't immune to freshman mistakes at the same time, and still has a lot to learn about the game at this level. So to see that Howard and Brown were the only two who didn't play in the second half of the spring game was encouraging, at least on that level.

Now the decision has been seemingly pushed off until at least August and if both quarterbacks are still on the roster then, there could be another battle that lasts way too long. But with the commitment the veteran players on this roster showed to winning by so many of them returning for a final season with the Buckeyes, this isn't another season where a quarterback battle can last into September.