

Ohio State Announces That More Than 44,000 Renewed Season Tickets



According to a report from the Columbus Dispatch and numbers obtained through an open-records request, Ohio State saw 44,320 season-ticket renewals this spring, following two separate deadline extensions because of the coronavirus pandemic.

While the number is down from 2019, when the Buckeyes saw 50,868 renewals, the 87 percent renewal rate does come as a bit of a surprise, given the question marks surrounding the viability of fans in the stands for this upcoming football season.

“Our donors continue to be as engaged as ever with the department of athletics, and perhaps even more so,” the athletic department’s statement says. “It is abundantly clear that their love for Ohio State teams, coaches and student-athletes is as strong as ever.”

These renewal numbers came prior to the push in recent weeks by athletic director Gene Smith to find a way to work some fans into the stadium while following Ohio’s social distancing laws. Smith stated on May 20 that he can see anywhere from 20,000 to 50,000 fans in a modified maximum capacity Ohio Stadium this fall, depending on “if guidelines are relaxed.”

“We’ve played with that a little bit as a framework to start as we move forward and think about what we’d ultimately be allowed to do,” Smith told reporters.

“We’re fortunate, with 100,000 seats in the stadium. So could we implement the current CDC guidelines, state guidelines around physical distancing, mask requirements and all those types of things in an outdoor environment and have obviously significantly less fans than we are used to? I think it’s possible. I just feel like we have the talent and skill and space capacity to provide an opportunity for a certain number of fans to have access to our particular stadium. Of course, that wouldn’t be true across the country because of capacity. But I think we can get there.”

In the case of a less-than-usual full capacity, Ohio State would have to find a solution to determine who is allowed to fill those seats, though that formula has not yet been worked out.

“We have to look at those and come up with some strategies within those groups,” Smith said. “Our point system has held the test of time, so that would probably be one. Then, of course, the parents and

the guests of our student-athletes and coaches would be a high priority. We'd come up with a strategy, but we haven't nailed that down."

With nearly 50,000 season-ticket holders expecting to have seats in Ohio Stadium this fall, that conversation could become a little more difficult for Ohio State, though president Michael Drake said in a statement on Wednesday that no final decisions have been made about anything, and Ohio State could still look to fill the stadium this fall, depending on the state of public health when August rolls around.

"Regarding football, our hope and intention is to safely have a football season, with an audience spaced out in our stadium, but we haven't made any final decisions," Drake said.