

Ohio State Co-Defensive Coordinator And Secondary Coach Jeff Hafley Discusses Awards, Previews Big Ten Championship Against Wisconsin



Following head coach Ryan Day's weekly press conference on Tuesday afternoon, Ohio State co-defensive coordinator and secondary coach Jeff Hafley stepped to the podium to answer questions from the media about the Buckeyes' numerous award nominations and the upcoming Big Ten Championship Game tilt against Wisconsin (8 p.m. on FOX).

Here's a brief recap of what he had to say:

- Hafley said the win over Michigan was the reason he wanted to coach in college football, but added he didn't fully understand the rivalry until after the game. "It was certainly very emotional after the game. To be part of that, get the first pair of gold pants, that's a special moment."
- Hafley on stopping Wisconsin running back Jonathan Taylor for the second time this season. "We'll do the best we can. It's going to take a great effort, a great plan and our guys are going to have to play very hard."
- Hafley respectively said he wants to focus on coaching in "the next biggest game" of his career rather than answer questions about potential coaching opportunities elsewhere.
- Hafley said they changed up the defensive personnel in the second half against Michigan, moving to a good balance of zone and man coverage to combat the Wolverines' offensive groupings.
- Hafley on improved play of cornerback Amir Riep, who played increased snaps against Michigan with an injury to Shaun Wade. "He got his chance on one of the biggest stages and he'll remember that for the rest of his life."
- Hafley on cornerback Jeff Okudah. "He's taking guys out of the game." Adds he'll be disappointed if Okudah doesn't win the Jim Thorpe Award next week. "I believe Jeff is the best corner in the country."
- Hafley said safety Marcus Hooker has been practicing well. "He deserved to play." Mentions his pass break up and near interception. "He's just another guy you're so happy for."
- Hafley pointed out how well cornerback Damon Arnette has played this season with a cast on his wrist. "A lot of guys wouldn't play."
- On playing Wisconsin for a second time this season: "You really have to think, stick to what you do

best, look at what they do best, how they attack you and you have to prepare well in practice.”

- Asked to compare Taylor and Ohio State running back J.K. Dobbins, Hafley declines. “I think they’re both really good players.” Adds J.K. is an even better person than football player. “Even being a defensive guy, I love being around that guy.”
- Hafley said he wishes defensive end Chase Young had one-on-one matchups ever snap, but it opens up opportunities for other players when he’s double- and triple-teamed.
- Hafley on being named a finalist for the Broyles Award as one of the nation’s top assistants. “It’s an honor to be on that list. To me, it’s a complement to our entire defensive staff.”
- Hafley said Day deserves to be the Big Ten coach of the year. Complements Day on how he took over such a historical program, how they’ve fought for adversity, but said you throw away the record and just look at how he is as a person, treating his players and coaches. “I don’t think there’s a better coach in the country.”