

Ohio State Head Coach Ryan Day Challenged Will Howard To Change Body Weight Over Offseason



Fair or not, football is a brutally physical game, one that will often reward those who are in elite shape, and spit out those who fall short of those expectations.

This is especially the case at Ohio State, where millions of dollars are poured into the football program's strength and conditioning/nutritional programs, all in an effort to get the Buckeyes ready to win the wars in the trenches come fall Saturdays.

Ohio State graduate transfer quarterback Will Howard has encountered this exact harsh reality in his first offseason in Columbus. While the former Kansas State transfer entered the program with loads of hype after two strong seasons with the Wildcats, many higher-ups within the Woody Hayes Athletic Center — starting with head coach Ryan Day — challenged the veteran signal caller to make some significant improvements to his game, an initiative that first started with a candid request to improve his overall body weight.

“Oh yeah,” Day said when asked if he challenged Howard to change his body over the offseason. “That started when he first got here. We got (performance dietitian) Kaila Olson involved and (strength coach) Mick (Marotti) and everybody we could. We have the opportunity here to do dexa scans (a body compositional analysis) here to get an idea of their body fat and makeup and lean mass. And he got challenged.”

While Day did not go into specifics on how much weight Howard lost or gained — he was listed as 347 pounds on both the spring and summer depth charts — he did say that the Buckeye transfer devoted a large part of the offseason to altering his diet and shifting his overall body mass, a change that he said is already paying dividends for Howard on the field this summer.

"It's one thing to put on weight and put off weight. But when you're talking about body fat and lean mass — you'll see him, he looks different," Day said. "He's moving different. He worked hard on that. Changed his diet, changed his workout plan and dedicated himself to the offseason. And I think you're seeing that right now.

"I thought there was more zip on the ball and I thought there was more accuracy today," he added. "Again, it's Day One. What are you going to do with Day One? But I thought the ball came out with more pace. I thought he had more discernment. And I thought there were some accurate throws out there."

Despite showing promising strides at the start of camp and being the odds-on favorite to start at quarterback for the Buckeyes this season, Howard enters the first weekend of fall camp in the thick of what seems to be a three-man quarterback battle with redshirt sophomore Devin Brown and true freshman Julian Sayin, both of whom have impressed at times throughout the first two practices.

It is a competition that Day wants to end within the next week to 10 days, but could very well last until the end of August, similarly to last year's competition between Brown and eventual starter and now Syracuse quarterback Kyle McCord.

Regardless of the timeline, Howard's improved physique — coupled with his overall greater comfortability with the team and veteran status — could put him in prime position to win the starting job for the 2024 season.

For Day, however, just winning the job won't be good enough for Howard. He wants his transfer quarterback to continue improving upon his body weight and mass far beyond the offseason months.

"Now, he has to sustain (his physique) throughout the season," Day said. "I forget exactly what he weighed in (on Thursday), but he's moving well for his size."