

Ohio State Head Coach Ryan Day Likes Maturity Of Current Crop Of Buckeyes



When Ohio State head coach Ryan Day got his start as the lead man for the Buckeyes, he had an established group of veterans on the field in 2019 to help ease his transition into the head coaching ranks, and it ultimately worked out well with an appearance in the College Football Playoff.

That group of players included the likes of cornerbacks Damon Arnette, Jeff Okudah and Shaun Wade, defensive end Chase Young, linebackers Tuf Borland and Pete Werner, offensive linemen Brandon Bowen, Jonah Jackson and Josh Myers, and wide receivers K.J. Hill, Austin Mack and Binjimen Victor, resulting in no shortage of veteran leadership on the team.

But just two years later, when Ohio State took the field at Minnesota to begin the 2021 season, things looked a little different. Then-redshirt freshman C.J. Stroud started the first game of his college career with then-true freshman running back TreVeyon Henderson by his side, and as a whole, Ohio State's roster did not feature much in the way of returning starters.

"I think there was one or two guys that had ever started a game at Ohio State," Day said Friday in an interview with the Big Ten Network. "That's so much different this year. You look at Tommy Eichenberg, Steele Chambers, JT (Tuimoloau), Denzel (Burke), Josh Proctor, these guys who gave played, Lathan Ransom - these guys have played a lot of football."

In addition to those that Day mentioned, Ohio State also welcomes Henderson back for his third season, and in total, the Buckeyes return double-digit starters from last season. Other returning starters include defensive end Jack Sawyer, defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr., tight end Cade Stover and wide receivers Marvin Harrison Jr., Emeka Egbuka and Julian Fleming, all back for Ohio State with plenty of games under their belts.

"There's that part of it, but then there's also the way that they approach their work every day," Day said. "I like the way that they're coming in, I like the way that they're preparing, I like the seriousness of it. There's some scars there, too, which is great. I think that gives us an edge going into the season."

Ohio State's fall camp has thus far been up and down, with the Buckeyes impressing in their first practice session open to the media but struggling to get into a groove on Friday, the team's eighth practice of the preseason. But Day said that edge the team has brought resulted in a good summer, and

they're hoping that carries over as the preseason continues.

"We've had a good summer leading up to the first practice, and now that we're in the teeth of the preseason, I like our maturity," Day said. "I think this is probably the most mature group we've had since probably '19, across the board. Very, very talented. The focus has been on competition, competing, being tough, being smart. That's what the team is focused on right now. But very business like, and coming off last season's finish, (there's) a lot of hunger."