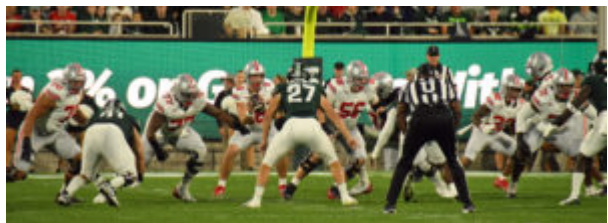


Ohio State Head Coach Ryan Day Says Right Guard, Kick Returner Positions Not Settled Yet



Ohio State junior offensive lineman Tegra Tshabola has assumed the majority of the starting reps at right guard since the beginning of the season, but that doesn't mean other players have gotten important reps at the position.

Redshirt freshman Austin Siereveld, who started in place of left guard Donovan Jackson for the team's first two games while he was dealing with an injury, earned a good chunk of game reps at right guard in place of Tshabola during the Buckeyes' 38-7 victory over Michigan State on Saturday night, garnering 40 snaps as opposed to Tshabola's 47 snaps, according to Pro Football Focus.

Although Tshabola did receive the lion's share of reps against the Spartans, Day said during his weekly press conference held at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center on Tuesday that neither him nor Siereveld separated themselves from the other on film with their performances in East Lansing Mich., which has propelled Day to not yet name a permanent starter at the position.

"I don't think we're there yet," Day said. "We'll kind of see how the practice goes. There was nothing on the film that set one ahead or behind. They both graded out similarly. So when that happens, we feel like if we can parse out the reps, that helps both of them play better and then stronger in the game. So we'll see how the preparation goes this week, and then decide as we get closer to the game."

Tshabola and Siereveld have rotated at right guard for the past two games, ever since Jackson returned from injury to assume his spot from Siereveld at left guard. Day has often proclaimed this season that Siereveld has earned time on the field with his performance so far this season and has taken advantage of the extra opportunities offered to him during the season and fall camp due to injury or illness on the offensive line.

Day has also yet to fully commit to a permanent starter at kick returner. The Buckeyes have mixed-and-matched at the position throughout the first four games, with Jayden Ballard returning kicks the first two games before being benched against Marshall after making a key mistake on a second-half punt against Western Michigan, electing to fair catch a kick that bounced to pin the Buckeyes inside their own 5-yard line.

Day called on Brandon Inniss to assume Ballard's role as the team's kick returner against the Herd, but against Michigan State it was Emeka Egbuka who was given the role, although he did not earn any opportunities for a return as each kick went for a touchback.

Day said the decision to put Egbuka at kick returner was made because he felt his veteran wideout gave the team the best chance to succeed in that role for that specific game, a game-by-game coaching strategy that he said he wants to continue to implement when choosing who will return kicks moving forward this season.

“Going into that game, we felt like there was a chance for us to try and steal a possession,” Day said. “Emeka fielding the kicks back there, we just felt like that was the right personnel. We’re going to try to make the best decisions on a weekly basis based on the personnel of our guys and what we’re going up against.

“Based on the way (Michigan State kicker Jonathan Kim) was kicking the ball anyways, a of them were out of the end zone. So we try to figure all those things in, and the good news is that we have some different options to go with. It’s a different scheme this week. So we’ll move more pieces around this week.”