

Ohio State Hosts 7th Annual Special Skills Football Invitational



The Ohio State football team welcomed approximately 200 individuals to the Special Skills Football Invitational.

In the seventh year of the event, the Buckeyes once again worked with special needs athletes through a variety of football drills. Ohio State players and coaches helped lead the instruction, much to the enjoyment of the campers.

Ohio State assistant strength and conditioning coaches Niko Palazeti and Chris Fenelon, sophomore tight end Jeremy Ruckert, senior safety Jordan Fuller and sophomore long snapper Roen McCullough fired up the campers, initiating the day by leading the participants through quick calcs.

Redshirt freshman running back Master Teague, redshirt freshman wide receiver Kamryn Babb, fifth-year senior tight end Derrick Malone, redshirt freshman defensive tackle Zaid Hamdan, junior linebacker Baron Browning, junior punter Drue Chrisman, wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, quality control coaches Corey Dennis and Keenan Bailey and former Ohio State linebacker and assistant strength and conditioning coach Anthony Schlegel were also among the Scarlet and Gray representatives who led drills.

The Special Skills Football Invitational began with the blessing of former Ohio State football coach Urban Meyer seven years ago, and this year marked the fifth year at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

The invitational will continue with the support from first-year head coach Ryan Day, along with the Columbus-based Five Strong Foundation and the Ohio chapter of the NFL Alumni Association.

“This is my favorite day of the year. It’s even better than Christmas,” said Steve Weaver, director of the Special Skills Sports Camps. “I’m extremely happy Coach Day chose to continue this event because it means a lot to the athletes.

“This day changes the perception of our athletes. They come out and do all of the same drills that the football players do. They flip tires, tackle the blocking pads, run with parachutes. This is a tremendous day to get everyone together where there are no barriers of any kind.”

Every drill Ohio State did in its summer workouts was replicated by the campers, including cone drills,

blocking sleds, tackling pads, speed tests and even a scrimmage.

Approximately 200 athletes from 15 area counties and 100 volunteers enjoyed the seventh annual invitational, with members of the Ohio State marching band on hand to welcome the group.

While it was evident the players and coaches had an effect on the young athletes, the inverse proved to be true as well.

“You absolutely cannot beat this camp,” Ruckert said. “Everyone out here has such a big heart. It’s been a long summer. Coach Marotti has us running and doing lots of drills every day so this was a good way to end it, keep our spirits up and get ready for camp. It was just great to get your mind off football for a little bit.”

The football camp is just one of several invitationals planned by Special Skills Sports this year. On Aug. 22, the Special Skills Baseball and Softball Invitational - with support from the Ohio State baseball program - will be held at the Bo Jackson Elite Sports Facility in Columbus. On Sept. 3, the Special Skills Tennis Invitational will be held in Mason, Ohio. The Special Skills Soccer Invitational - with support from the Columbus Crew - will be held at the Superkick Sports Complex on Sept. 12. The Special Skills Basketball Invitational will be held in October - with the date to be determined - including the support of both Ohio State basketball teams at Value City Arena.

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