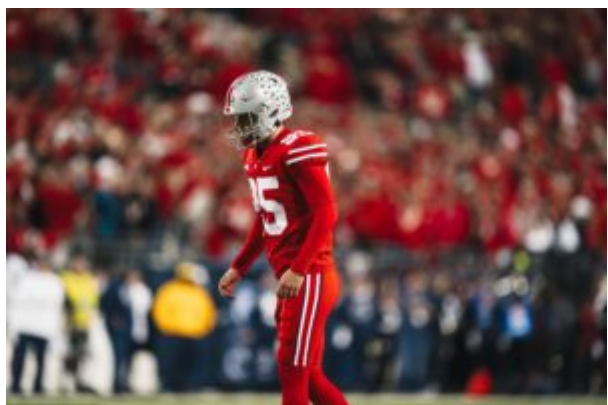


Ohio State Kicker Noah Ruggles Returns After Taking Spring Semester Off



Ohio State coaches confirmed Friday that kicker Noah Ruggles has returned to the team after taking off the spring semester.

Ruggles was not enrolled during the spring semester at Ohio State and spent time away from the team with the blessing of his coaches - including head coach Ryan Day and special teams coordinator Parker Fleming - while dealing with "kind of a personal thing," according to Fleming.

"It wasn't a big deal," Fleming said. "It was nothing bad. It was just kind of a situation the head coach and I had, and that's the direction we went."

Given Ruggles' status as a sixth-year player, the staff was not concerned with him spending time away from the team. Fleming said he and Ruggles were in constant communication and helping him to make sure he was supported.

"He's an older guy," Fleming said. "He's mature. He can take care of himself, and that's something he was doing the entire time he wasn't with us."

"He needed a little time away," Day said, "but he's back."

Ruggles transferred to Ohio State last offseason out of North Carolina and connected on 20 of 21 field goal attempts in his inaugural season with the Buckeyes.

Ohio State currently has three kickers on scholarship, including Ruggles, sophomore Jake Seibert and junior Parker Lewis, who transferred to the Buckeyes from USC last week.

While Ruggles is the incumbent and will likely kick field goals for the Buckeyes, Lewis could potentially be in line to handle kickoff duties. Lewis had 22 touchbacks on 38 attempts last season, compared to just 21 touchbacks on 99 attempts by Ruggles.

"I think all competition is good competition," Fleming said. "I think that our job here is to make sure that we get the best out of our players every day. The motto around here is fight, fight to be the best version of yourself every day. And in some places, the best possible way to do that is to compete. And sometimes competition against yourself is really good. Sometimes competition against other people

brings the best out of everybody. And that's kind of our mindset around here."