

Ohio State Practice Report: 8 Days Into Spring Camp, Buckeyes' Offense Takes Shape With 'Group Deal'



When head coach Ryan Day took over Ohio State officially Jan. 2, his offseason moves as he finalized an offensive coaching staff ended in continuity — aside from the hire of passing game coordinator/quarterbacks coach Mike Yurcich.

As the Buckeyes entered spring camp March 6, Day expressed his plans to keep hold of the offense's play-calling role after he gained more influence on the second-year offensive coordinator/quarterbacks job for the 2018 season under former head coach Urban Meyer.

After the eighth day of spring camp Friday at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, OSU passed the midway point with its final March practice. Ohio State breaks for the weekend before its action resumes Monday with its ninth practice of spring camp.

With the two-man quarterback competition between sophomore Justin Fields and redshirt freshman Matthew Baldwin still open, six practices before the April 13 spring game at Ohio Stadium, the offense continues to take shape.

"You get these 15 practices and then you get into the summer," third-year offensive coordinator/tight ends coach Kevin Wilson said Friday. "When their ball comes out, they can be there. So they've got to continue to enhance through the summer months, but it's tough. It's not coach-speak or phony, but sometimes you're really just trying to figure it out and it takes a little time.

"I think the worst thing we can do is force it. Don't say, 'Well, Matt Baldwin can't do this. So don't do it.' Maybe Matt can, but it just takes a little bit of time. When you get 15 practices, three times a week, sometimes maybe you need a little bit more (time). Help them through summer and preseason, so it takes time and don't rush the time. But as we get in that second week of preseason is when you really start figuring where you're going. Between now and then, we need to make sure we're not having so much fun and get all over the place. You're not developing the toughness you need for the offense and the pass protection you need and the quality of play.

"So as you look at all these things that guys can do, you can become the old 'master of all' or 'jack of all'

and you don't master anything. So that's where we've got to be smart. Sometimes is less than more with these guys."

Quarterback is the tip of the iceberg for an offense with fresh faces in competition for spots in rotations at multiple positions.

While tight end return its entire position group, offensive line coach Greg Studrawa aims to replace four starters with limited depth as junior left tackle Thayer Munford sits out all of spring camp and works back from what Day called a "lower-back issue." Wide receivers coach Brian Hartline has to fill several voids in the rotation left by three captains from the 2018 team while redshirt freshman Kamryn Babb undergoes another knee surgery and remains out indefinitely.

Despite the moving parts, the returning staffers and Yurcich follow Day's lead, collaborating together throughout spring camp before cementing personnel when the roster reaches 100 percent for the fall.

"You kind of sit around and almost play script," Wilson said. "Like (Friday), we were play calling, but first 48 plays — we had decided (Thursday) what we were doing. So it wasn't like (it was unknown). We knew it was going to be third-and-10, we knew it was going to be third-and-8, third-and-5 (situations each play). We knew (the ball) was going to be (lined up) on the left hash. We didn't know what the defense was going to do, but we knew what we were going to do.

"So there's been a little bit of that, but typically, we all kind of do it together. Like yesterday, (Day) came in and said, 'Here are the things that I like.' And with Coach Stud saying, 'Hey, by the way, give me this runner and this runner,' or Coach Hartline saying, 'Hey, I like this pass.' So it's a group deal. Ultimately, still, (Day) is the head coach — ultimately, he's an offensive-oriented guy. So we're still going to follow his lead, but through that — me and Mike with the skill guys, and me and Stud with the big guys — we're still blending them together."

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