

Ohio State President Kristina Johnson, Athletic Director Gene Smith, Head Coach Ryan Day Discuss Big Ten's Return



Ohio State president Dr. Kristina M. Johnson, athletic director Gene Smith and head coach Ryan Day were at the forefront of the Big Ten's decision to resume the fall football season, thus all three met remotely with the media on Wednesday morning to discuss the news.

Here's a brief recap of what they had to say:

Kristina Johnson

- "Clearly it's a great day for Buckeye Nation," Johnson said. "We're so excited for Buckeye Nation. It's what we always wanted - an opportunity for student-athletes to compete in sports they love."
- Johnson credited Dr. Jim Borchers, Ohio State's team physician, for his work over the last month. Also thanked Smith and Ohio State head coach Ryan Day.
- Johnson, a former student-athlete at Stanford, said she's grateful for the opportunities provided to her because of sports.
- Johnson said the COVID-19 positivity rate of students on Ohio State's campus is 2.2 percent after spiking at more than 7 percent this summer. "I couldn't be prouder of our young men and women for setting examples."
- Johnson said the biggest change from Aug. 11, the date of postponement to today, is the ability to secure daily rapid testing.
- "I love the league. I love Ohio State," Johnson said. "The Big Ten conference wants to be a leader."
- "I think we have come out with a protocol and a process and a way to play and now we get to play for all the marbles," Johnson said.
- Johnson on playing amid pandemic: "I do believe we will have clean playing fields with no athletes on the field who have COVID."

Gene Smith

- Smith thanked Johnson for her impact on the decision, especially as she just became the acting university president late last month. "To come in and deal with what we were dealing with in the

athletics space is a daunting task, and she's been phenomenal. I can't thank her enough for her tireless work."

- "We're in a better place, regardless of how we got here," Smith said.
- Smith said they'll start putting together a schedule tomorrow morning that features eight games plus a Big Ten championship game on Dec. 19, as well as a ninth game for teams that aren't participating (No. 2 Big Ten East vs No. 2 Big Ten West, etc.)
- Smith on the lack of margin for error: "I feel if every school embraces the protocols and do, frankly, what our student-athletes, our football players are doing, we should have a chance for clean competitive window for Saturdays."
- On season without fans: "Let's mitigate the risk. Make sure we have the games and played in a safe way."
- Smith is confident the criteria put in place gives Ohio State a chance to make the College Football Playoff, even with fewer games than other conferences.
- Smith said Ohio State hasn't determined how the temporary postponement and resumption of the season will impact the budget. Added conversations with TV partners regarding media revenue need to happen first.
- "The emergence of rapid testing was critical," Smith said.
- Smith said athletic directors still need to finalize a plan on returning to practice tomorrow morning, but he expects them to immediately return to 20-hour practice weeks.
- Smith said he's talked to guard Wyatt Davis and left a message for cornerback Shaun Wade about their potential return, but didn't elaborate on the conversations. Davis then called him during the Zoom meeting, with Smith taking the call off screen.
- Smith on Day's leadership: "He held the team together at a time when you could have had disruptions within the team, and that never happened."
- Smith urged the media to use their platform to encourage fans to avoid "super-spreader" events such as tailgates and house parties.

Ryan Day

- "I'm excited for the players. They never lost faith. They never lost trust," Day said. "Their behavior through this time has been excellent, and they never stopped fighting."
- Day said Davis and Wade wanted to play this fall and that they should be able to if they're still want to after opting out during the last few days leading up to the decision.
- Day said he's not concerned about the lack of off weeks in the eight- or nine-game season.
- "Our team is stronger than it was on Aug. 11 for going through this," Day said.
- On quarterback Justin Fields: "What can you say about Justin Fields? The way that he's gone about his business, the way he's been a leader. I can't say enough about who he is, and the fact that he's going to have an opportunity to play with the rest of these seniors. That's all they ever asked."

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