

Ohio State Quarterback Justin Fields, Defensive End Jonathon Cooper Discuss Big Ten's Return



Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields and defensive end Jonathon Cooper met virtually with the media on Friday morning to discuss the Big Ten's return, the disappointment when the conference initially postponed, their expectations for the season and more.

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

Justin Fields

- Fields on his growing leadership: "Seeing how much I can do as an individual has made me realize how much of an impact I can make."
- Fields calls the wide receivers Julian Fleming, Gee Scott, Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Mookie Cooper the "most polished freshmen" he's ever seen. Though they haven't had full practices yet, they have done 7-on-7s in recent weeks.
- Fields thinks his petition to reinstate the season helped, but wasn't the only reason the Big Ten did so: "At the end of the day, we all got what we wanted. I was doing whatever I could to get the season back."
- Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields said he never considered opting out of a postponed season. Didn't want to rush a decision and was hopeful he'd have a chance to show the world where he's improved in the offseason. "I don't think there are words to describe how determined I am. It's just going to have to show itself."
- Fields said if Ohio State has the season it thinks it's capable of, ESPN should do a "30 for 30" on the season.
- Fields on opportunity to compete for a national championship: "We know we have to win every game to get to the playoffs and we have less room for error."
- Fields on Wyatt Davis and Shaun Wade returning after opting out: "I just think the brotherhood is real. I just think with them coming back, that just shows how much love there is on this team and how much brotherhood there is and how close we really are." Said his connections with everyone on the team has grown considerably this offseason, not just the offense.
- "We want to play. No one's forcing us to play. We want to play," Fields said, noting head coach Ryan Day told the team they had the option to opt out if they wanted to, but everyone wants to

play.

- Fields on social distancing, avoiding situations where it would be easy to contract COVID-19 and the safety protocols in place for the season. “That’s a small sacrifice for what we want to accomplish. A small sacrifice for a big reward.”
- “I don’t think we could have a better leader,” Fields said Day, noting Day told him he hasn’t been able to sleep since the Big Ten initially postponed the season.

Jonathon Cooper

- Cooper on returning for a redshirt year only to have it postponed: “It was tough, just not being able to control what was going on. I came back for another year to prove what type of player I was, to come back and be a leader for my team. To know that was almost taken away from me really sucks. We’re back, though, so all those feelings that I had are gone.”
- Cooper said he had meetings with Big Ten commissioner Kevin Warren and other student-athletes. “The main thing I wanted to get across to him was we wanted to play.”
- Cooper said he’s worked really hard to get to this point, and the motivation he was carrying over from last year’s season when he was injured is now higher than ever.
- Cooper on Ohio State’s depth along the defensive line, notably following the departure of No. 2 overall pick Chase Young. “We’re not just one player, we’re the Rushmen.”
- Cooper on Big Ten’s decision to reinstate the season: “It was emotional. Everyone knows my career at Ohio State hasn’t been easy.”
- Cooper on the fight to restore the season: “Everything they did for us would be for nothing if we don’t go out there and take care of business.”
- “Coach Day is amazing coach, man,” Cooper said. “Take away all the football stuff. He’s an amazing person.”

For four free issues of the biweekly print edition of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, sign up at the link below. No credit card required: <http://www.buckeyesports.com/subscribe-4issue-trial/>