

Ohio State Special Teams Coordinator/Safeties Coach Matt Barnes Breaks Down Specialists, Secondary



Ohio State special teams coordinator/safeties coach Matt Barnes spoke to members via Zoom call on Wednesday, Oct. 14.

What follows is a bullet-point rundown of Barnes' comments on the Buckeye secondary and special teams units, and more:

- Josh Proctor and Marcus Hooker?
- Josh Proctor and Marcus Hooker are both “outstanding players and outstanding young men,” but their skill sets are a little bit different, which allows them to play in some different spots. One skillset vs. the other allows us to be more multiple than we need to be and play in multiple spots.
- Josh Proctor brings a lot of those things too, and his cover ability to play man-to-man down near the box. They both can do both, and they both have done both at a high level, but I think that’s the difference between the two.
- Josh Proctor?
- The big thing for Josh is consistency. He’s got some unbelievable talent and ability and potential. I’ve seen him make some outstanding plays. The big thing for Josh is showing up every day, being right on all the little things, all the details, and consistently getting it right. Not just one day and then take a step back the next. We’ve just got to continue to build small victories and put one good day in front of another.
- Marcus Hooker?
- When I think of Marcus Hooker, I think of a true center fielder. I think of a really ‘rangey’ player that’s instinctive, that has freakish ball skills. He really tracks the ball well and does a great job of going to get it. He runs the alley well for us in the run game.
- Difference between Josh Proctor and Marcus Hooker?
- Josh Proctor brings a lot of those same things to the table. But I think with Proctor, he’s probably, as far as coverage ability and the ability to go down and play man-to-man or ply closer to the box, I think that’s the biggest difference between the two.
- Marcus Hooker compared to Malik Hooker?
- I wasn’t here, so I lean on the film and the stories I’ve heard. My understanding is there are a lot of similarities.

- One-high safety vs. two-high safety?
- We're really running the same defense. We're not a split-safety team. We dabbled in the Clemson game, but even then, it was rotational. If it's not broke, don't fix it.
- Coaching with Kerry Coombs?
- In the secondary, I think it's critical to not have too many voices. Kerry does a great job. He runs our room and makes sure everyone is on the same page.
- The cornerbacks and safeties meet together.
- "I thought as highly of Jordan (Fuller) as I've ever felt of any player." He has a "brilliant, brilliant mind." Finding his replacement starts with knowing your own job.
- On the long snapper competition: "So far, so good." Right now, Brad Robinson is the starter.
- Whether Ohio State can get Hooker and Proctor onto the field together depends on what the offense does. It's situational.
- Punt/Kick Returners?
- Garrett Wilson, Demario McCall, Jaxon Smith-Njigba, Cameron Martinez, Xavier Johnson and Chris Olave are among the players getting looks at returner. "Who's it going to be on Saturdays? I'm not ready to tell you that yet."
- Kicker Blake Haubeil always has feedback for the other specialists.
- The biggest difference at Ohio State compared to other places I've worked at is the culture.
- Josh Proctor and Marcus Hooker? "When it comes to physical talent, I don't think there's a shortage of talent for either one." They are "at least as athletic if not more" than Jordan Fuller, but we're still looking for more consistency from them.
- I'm not ashamed to say he doesn't think he's had an original idea yet in his football coaching career. I'm always watching other football to learn.
- Wide receivers?
- The offense has "so much talent" with "so many weapons at receiver." None of the receivers are just average.
- "I've never seen a receiver corps that is even close to resembling the amount of speed and talent."
- Josh Proctor and Marcus Hooker aspire to be "very similar" to Fuller, but you have to be careful not to try to be somebody else.
- I chart what the long snappers do in team punt periods, which is where Bradley Robinson shined. "Right now, Brad has been more consistent" than Roen McCullough.
- Cameron Martinez "takes so much pride" in his game. Calls him a "legit tough guy." Nothing he does that's positive will surprise him.
- I think as highly of Jonathon Cooper as anyone he's ever been around. "There's a ton of leadership on the defensive side of the ball.

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