

Day Says Ohio State Will Keep Offensive Line Group Together



The plan for Ohio State is to stick with the offensive line configuration shown in its 20-13 win over Penn State, according to Ohio State head coach Ryan Day.

After the injury of left tackles Zen Michalski and Josh Simmons in the Nebraska and Oregon games, respectively, the Buckeyes had to make a couple of switches to their offensive line ahead of the Penn State game.

The Buckeyes moved usual starting left guard Donovan Jackson to left tackle and started last year's starting center Carson Hinzman at left guard. Although Hinzman was a starter in 2023 at Center, he didn't have the easiest path to start for the Buckeyes again this year. Hinzman was benched ahead of Ohio State's loss in the Cotton Bowl to Missouri, and replaced by former Alabama starting center Seth McLaughlin ahead of the 2024 season.

In his press conference on Tuesday, Day said the choice to insert him into the lineup came down to experience.

"We looked at him during the preseason, he was out with illness, he was playing backup center, we moved him to guard, we felt like at that time Tegra (Tshabola) gave us more at right guard, and with Donny at left guard, Seth was solidified at center, so we kept Carson right there at center at the time," Day said. "Since Donovan got moved out, we felt like there was a hole there that we needed to fill, and we had a couple of different options there and some good options, but in this game, we felt like experience was the right thing to go with."

Neither player played perfect, and Jackson specifically gave up two sacks to star Penn State edge rusher Abdul Carter, but both players were named offensive players of the game, along with fellow offensive linemen Josh Fryar and McLaughlin, while grading out as champions. Additionally, other than Carter's two sacks on starting quarterback Will Howard, the Buckeyes only allowed one more sack in the entire game and the Buckeyes picked up 176 yards on the ground. The offensive line flexed its muscles on the last drive of the game when the Buckeyes ran out the last 5:13 of the clock with 11 straight run plays. Day was impressed enough with what he saw from Hinzman to keep him as a starter on the offensive line going forward.

"After watching the film he stepped up in a big way and showed us that he can play guard, so we're going to continue to go with Carson and we saw what we saw on film and now he's got to keep building on it," Day said.

Unlike Simmons who is out for the season with a knee injury, Michalski will rejoin the Buckeyes at some point this season, although Day does not expect him to come back this week. As of right now, the plan for the Buckeyes is to stick with the formula that helped the team defeat Penn State, even when Michalski makes his return.

"I think the focus will be to stick with what we got right now because we feel like there was good synergy coming out of that game," Day said.