

Campbell, Dixon Played Key Roles In Haskins' Heisman Hype



Among seven players left from Ohio State's 23-member recruiting class of 2014, fifth-year senior receivers Parris Campbell and Johnnie Dixon made noise in their final regular season as Buckeyes, where they each racked up career-best seasons behind the arm of sophomore quarterback Dwayne Haskins.

Campbell and Dixon, respective former four-star prospects from Akron (Ohio) St. Vincent-St. Mary and Palm Beach Gardens (Fla.) Dwyer, both turned down early entry into the 2018 NFL draft. Their moves paid off as they became better all-around wideouts in OSU's revamped offense through 13 games, riding an uptempo passing attack led by Haskins.

With junior K.J. Hill (67 receptions for 831 yards and six touchdowns) sandwiched between Campbell (79 receptions for 992 yards and 11 touchdowns) and Dixon (40 receptions for 642 yards and seven touchdowns), the two seniors are first and third among Ohio State's leading receivers. Campbell and Dixon have combined for 18 touchdowns and 1,634 yards on 199 receptions — 57.2 percent of Haskins' completions (348), 35.7 percent of his passing yards (4,580) and 38.3 percent of the touchdowns (47) he has thrown.

As they watched Haskins (6-3, 220) grow up before their eyes, from four-star prospect out of Potomac (Md.) Bullis School in the 2016 recruiting class to one-year wonder in 2018, Campbell and Dixon played imperative roles in helping the first-year starter rise to the stardom, all while developing themselves along the way. Haskins went to New York from Dec. 7-8 as one of the Heisman Trophy's three finalists, but Campbell and Dixon were among the reasons why.

"You're blessed to be in a position like that because a lot of guys aren't talked about in the Heisman race, or breaking every record or possibly being a first round pick," Dixon said. "The kid is blessed. He grew up in front of us — he did everything he needed to do, every game. Big credit to him for stepping into his new role and doing what he did."

As the Rose Bowl approaches Jan. 1 at 5 p.m. ET when the No. 6 Buckeyes (12-1) battle No. 9 Washington (10-3) and the Huskies' defense, which ranks 21st nationally in passing yards allowed (185.4 per game), the trio ends its ride together against one of its tallest tasks yet. The door for Haskins' return to OSU is open, but Campbell and Dixon leave with head coach Urban Meyer, whose

retirement effective Jan. 2 was announced Dec. 4 with offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Ryan Day set to take over.

“I think we’re very focused,” Campbell said. “Obviously, we don’t play the game tomorrow. We’re working our way up. ... But this group is just enjoying each other right now — enjoying the older guys, enjoying Coach Meyer and just enjoying the last couple of moments we have together.

From offseason sessions with Campbell (6-1, 208) and Dixon (5-11, 198) to Saturdays in the fall at Ohio Stadium and opposing venues across the landscape of college football, Haskins’ growth got accelerated by his veteran targets as they enjoyed personal-best campaigns. Whether or not Haskins joins Campbell and Dixon on Sundays in 2019 remains to be seen, but he and his wideouts have quite the finale coming in “The Granddaddy of Them All.”

“We’re not done breaking records yet,” Haskins said. “Honestly, it’s been a lot of fun dealing with these guys. I remember when I was a young pup and these guys were the older guys getting me ready for practice and for games. It’s been a lot of growth and experience over this season and it’s been a lot of fun being able to go out there and play every Saturday despite the distractions, despite all the things that went on off the field. But on the field, we had a blast.”

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