

Previewing The Spring: Quarterback Battle Leads The Way



Buckeye Sports Bulletin is previewing every position on Ohio State's roster leading into the beginning of spring practice, which is set to begin on March 7. Check back every week day for a new breakdown on how the spring might play out for the Buckeyes.

No position on a football team is more important than the quarterback, and it's a position that Ohio State currently has unsettled entering spring practice.

The battle, of course, is between junior Kyle McCord and redshirt freshman Devin Brown, both of whom are looking to fill the shoes left by C.J. Stroud, expected to be one of the top picks in the upcoming NFL Draft. Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said earlier this month that while the competition could stretch into the fall, he's hoping that a starter can be named coming out of the spring.

"I don't know where we'll be. I hope that one of them emerges and we can name a starter, I really do," Day said. "Because I think the way that our dynamic is, I think it'd be great for our program to be able to do that. There were times in the past when I didn't see that happening. I'm hoping that can happen. If it doesn't, it doesn't. But some vision on who the starter is coming out of the spring would be nice. So hoping that one of them emerges here in these 15 practices."

McCord has the obvious leg up, boasting an additional year in the program ahead of Brown and having already started a game for the Buckeyes, filling in for Stroud against Akron in 2021. McCord led Ohio State to a win over the Zips before relinquishing the job back to Stroud, but it was a solid outing in McCord's freshman season.

"I thought there were some things that were OK, but I thought there were some things that we need to certainly clean up," Day said after that game. "Kyle does a really good job preparing. An excellent job. He puts a lot of work into this thing, and so it's the first time he's ever played in a college football game. He's a true freshman, so I think the game was moving pretty fast for him early on."

While he didn't get the chance to start this past season, he still got some time on the field, throwing for 190 yards and a touchdown while completing 80.0 percent (16 of 20) of his passes as Stroud stayed late in the majority of contests.

For as little as McCord saw the field, it was even more evident for Brown, who appeared in just two games and recorded just one statistic all season – a carry for just one yard. He'll enter the spring without having thrown a pass yet for Ohio State, but Day is treating it as a true quarterback battle between the signal callers.

"I'm excited to see these two guys compete. What an unbelievable opportunity for both of them," Day said. "When you look at the guys that are surrounding and the cast that's surrounding them, I mean you couldn't be more excited to be quarterback right now, I would think, in college football."

Beyond McCord and Brown, Ohio State brought in a transfer quarterback to help fill in depth at the position. Former Oregon State quarterback Tristan Gebbia arrives at Ohio State for his seventh season of college football, previously throwing for 1,250 yards and five touchdowns with the Beavers.

While Gebbia's addition adds a needed veteran presence to the quarterback room, the expectation is not that Gebbia will compete for the open starting job, or even expect to see the field barring injury. Instead, Gebbia is looking to jump start a potential career in coaching – though he's ready to go in if needed for Ohio State.

"He shared with us that he wants to be a (graduate assistant) and a coach, and felt like coming here was an opportunity to build his network but also provide some depth and be able to possibly help in that room," Day said. "He's coming in with the mindset that if he gets on the field, he's ready to go. But thought he was really a great addition to the room and can help mentor some of those young guys in there."

Speaking of those young guys, the lone freshman addition to this group is incoming first-year quarterback Lincoln Kienholz, who arrives at Ohio State out of Pierre (S.D.) T.F. Riggs.

Kienholz – who is not an early enrollee, and will instead arrive on campus over the summer – threw for over 9,000 yards and 100 touchdowns during his high school career, adding 1,435 rushing yards and 24 touchdowns in his senior season. He'll have the benefit of learning behind several veteran options for Ohio State during his first year with the Buckeyes.

Projected Depth Chart

#	Yr.	Name
6	Jr.	Kyle McCord
15	R-So.	Devin Brown
N/A	7th-Sr.	Tristan Gebbia
N/A	Fr.	Lincoln Keinhholz