

Radio Show Recap: Urban Meyer Updates Ohio State's Right Guard Depth Ahead Of B1G Championship Game



Before the Buckeyes head to Indianapolis for the Big Ten Championship Game, an 8 p.m. kickoff on FOX at Lucas Oil Stadium, No. 6 Ohio State (11-1, 8-1) wraps up its week of practice Thursday at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

As he does every week, before heading back out to prepare the team for its upcoming conference title clash with Northwestern, head coach Urban Meyer made an appearance on his radio show with 97.1 The Fan.

From further clarification on OSU's depth at right guard to final thoughts for several other position performances in last Saturday's 62-39 rout of Michigan, Meyer tied up The Game with the No. 7 Wolverines (10-2, 8-1) and looked ahead to the weekend matchup against the No. 21 Wildcats (8-4, 8-1).

Urban Meyer

- Without fifth-year senior right guard Demetrius Knox, who is believed to be out for the season after a Lisfranc injury late in the fourth quarter against Michigan, Meyer confirmed redshirt Wyatt Davis against as Ohio State's starter vs. Northwestern. However, the depth beyond Davis has options, starting with junior Branden Bowen, who has been the backup right tackle for the past month but has moved back to right guard in the wake of Knox's absence.
 - "Wyatt Davis will start," Meyer said. "We've been talking about him for a while. We've got a lot of confidence in him. He's about five pounds, seven pounds lighter. He's a little bit more athletic and he's tough as nails. The thing he's lacking is experience and endurance, so that's something we're going to monitor. He's had a couple of good days of practice. Branden Bowen has also been moved to right guard and (redshirt freshman) Josh Myers, and then (junior) Josh Alabi. So we finally have some depth there. ... (Junior center) Mike Jordan's the swing, (but) I don't know if we'll go there. I think Bowen will be the next."
- With a desire to run the ball over the past two weeks, Dwayne Haskins has changed the complexion of Ohio State's offense, capped by what Meyer called "by far" the sophomore quarterback's best game against Michigan. Haskins was 20-of-31 (64.5-percent) passing for 396 yards and six touchdowns to zero interceptions, and rushed seven times for 34 yards.

- “That’s a very strong feeling in college football — not just here,” Meyer said of Haskins bringing balance to the offense as a runner. “You don’t have to be the (former Ohio State quarterback) J.T. (Barrett), but there’s got to be a threat. I use comments like that keeps the defense clean. What that means is there’s gap control. You have to have two rushers on the left, two rushers on the right or there’s going to be scrambles. We’ve seen it with (Penn State quarterback) Trace McSorley, really, every school. Every (coach) has a guy that can do that. ... (Haskins) had a huge first down in the fourth quarter Saturday when everybody was covered. He put his foot in the ground and launched himself for 12 yards and got the first down, so I thought that was by far his best game.”
- Despite the win, Ohio State committed 12 penalties for 150 yards against Michigan. On-field discipline has been an issue all season long — Meyer noted that it stems from practice — with 98 penalties for 912 yards in 12 games nationally ranking 125th out of 130 teams in college football.
 - “Tell them, ‘Don’t do it,’” Meyer said. “It’s really not (subjective). We don’t concern ourselves with that. Was it (a penalty) or not? That’s not our (call). They called it on you. My issue is you see some of that in practice and get it fixed. So yeah, that’s not something I enjoy talking about.”
- Among others on Ohio State’s defense, junior defensive end Jonathon Cooper and junior linebacker Malik Harrison stood out to Meyer. Cooper and Harrison combined for two of the defense’s three sacks posted against Michigan, energizing the Buckeyes as they pulled away from the Wolverines in their second-half explosion.
 - “His energy level was high,” Meyer said of Cooper. “He rattled that quarterback (Michigan’s Shea Patterson) a couple of times and I love Coop. ... Malik played fantastic. He’s been getting better and better and better, and once again, how does he get better? He practices really (well). So (Harrison and) our linebackers played very well in that game.”
- As for Northwestern, its defense is led by sophomore linebacker Blake Gallagher, who has 112 tackles (6 1/2 for loss) and a fumble recovery to pace the Wildcats. What stands out about Northwestern overall on that side of the ball?
 - “It’s players, first of all,” Meyer said. “They’re a very well-thought-out scheme. Like I said, they’re not going to give you the edge, not going to give you (anything). They keep everything in front of you and up front, they have big linemen that control gaps and let the linebackers run.”

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