

Ryan Day “Couldn’t Be Happier” For AD Gene Smith Following Retirement Announcement



Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith was the one that made the decision to stay in-house for the football program’s most recent head coaching hire, bringing up Ryan Day to replace Urban Meyer following the 2018 season.

Now nearly five years later, with Smith announcing on Wednesday that he will retire next summer - effective on June 30, 2024 - Day spoke later in the day about the impact Smith, who is entering his 19th and final year as Ohio State’s athletic director, has had on Day’s career .

“I wanted to just make sure I say that I couldn’t any happier for Gene and (his wife) Sheila,” Day said Wednesday at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. “What they’ve done at Ohio State, the 19 years that they’ve dedicated themselves, they’ve poured their heart and soul into Ohio State athletics and the university in general.

“What I owe and my family owes him, I can’t even really verbalize. (The) opportunity to be a first-time head coach at Ohio State, and he trusted in me, and our relationship is going to go on forever,” Day continued. “There will be a lot of time to figure out what the next phase is an how that goes - he’ll be with us until next summer - but I think today is an opportunity to reflect on what great work has been done by Gene. Certainly going to miss him, but we’ve just some time to worry about that.”

Day said that an important factor he hopes to share with the next athletic director at Ohio State is “constant communication,” something Day said that he and Smith kept on top of, from discussing an upcoming football game to general life advice.

“Weekly, the things that he and I would talk about, or he’d come in on a Friday morning and we’d talk about that (upcoming) game and he’d just give you different bits of advice, whether it’s how to manage people or what’s coming down the road, just how to handle being the head coach at Ohio State, because it’s unique in and of itself,” Day said. “What to stay focused on, what not to listen to, what to really

focus your efforts on.

“Because of all that, it’s allowed me great clarity,” he continued. “It’s also allowed me great confidence to do my job that along the way he believed in our values and how we do things here, and has allowed us an opportunity to hire one of the best staffs in America.”

Beyond the impact Smith has had on the football program, Day recognized Smith’s contributions to every one of Ohio State’s scholarship sports, as well as his handling of his various responsibilities as athletic director.

“I think about 36 sports and over 1,000 athletes that he manages, the coaches, there’s so much going on here at Ohio State and there’s so much that comes at him politically – there’s a lot going on,” Day said. “And the way he’s handled it with grace is remarkable.”

“Ultimately, when you leave some place, you want to be able to talk about the impact you made on people,” Day said, “and there are a lot of people about that, for sure – and I’ll be one of them.”