

Ryan Day Looking For More Wide Receiver Depth This Season



Ohio State has long been lauded for cultivating a wide receiver factory that consistently produces top-tier NFL talent, with notable pass-catching alumni such as Marvin Harrison Jr., Jaxon Smith-Njigba, Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson all earning their way to becoming first-round NFL Draft selections across the past three seasons.

This tradition of high-level wide receiver play appears to be continuing in the 2024 season for the Buckeyes, with senior Emeka Egbuka poised to become the next first-round draft selection out of Ohio State, while youngsters such as Carnell Tate and Jeremiah Smith have received rave reviews in their early time with the program.

While the Buckeyes seem to have a plethora of reliable options at wide receiver this season, head coach Ryan Day suggested he is still looking for some added depth at the position, saying at Big Ten Media Days at Lucas Oil Stadium on Tuesday that he wants to see some others in Brian Hartline's wide receiver group step up as the season nears.

"We're kind of top-heavy there," Day said in his initial press conference Tuesday. "Where is (wide receiver) No. 4, 5, 6 and 7?"

Day pointed to some specific Buckeyes who can carry that mantle this season, such as sophomore wideout Brandon Inniss, a former five-star recruit who is looking to take the next step in his development after catching just one catch — albeit that one catch being a 58-yard touchdown — along with senior Jayden Ballard, who has made minimal impact with Ohio State while mainly serving as a backup to the Buckeyes' NFL-bound receivers.

"Brandon Inniss, you feel Brandon Inniss when you are out there," Day said. "So this is going to be a great opportunity for him to (step up). Jayden Ballard is another guy that's been in the program a while. We need him to step up and make an impact. He is a down-the-field threat with great speed.

"These guys have been in the program for a while now, so there's been a lot of built-up springs and summers and practices and development along the way. We need J.B. to step up, and he's been charged with that challenge along the way."

Day also challenged another seldom talked about Buckeye wideout to perform this season in sophomore Bryson Rodgers, a former four-star recruit in Ohio State's 2023 class who played in just two games his freshman campaign. The Buckeyes' head coach had high praise for Rodgers, listing him as one of the more unguardable players on the roster.

"Bryson Rodgers is another guy that gives us some playmaking ability in the slot. He's gotten bigger. He's gotten stronger. He needs to continue to play that way because he has the ability to run routes and get open against anybody in the country in my opinion."

Day, who also listed sophomore Kojo Antwi as a player who needs to step up in Hartline's room, said that although having wide receiver depth will play a major part in the success of Ohio State's offense, he will not ultimately know who will emerge as key players in that position group until the team goes through preseason camp starting Aug. 1.

"That four, five, six, and seven is going to be critical in solidifying the wide receiver depth," Day said. "But that's going to have to happen this preseason."