

Ryan Day Not Ready To Name Ohio State's Starting QB After Spring Game



COLUMBUS, Ohio — When he arrived at his press conference in the southeast tower of Ohio Stadium, Ryan Day was bombarded — as expected — with questions about Ohio State's quarterbacks.

In the 6:30 of media availability after the Buckeyes' spring game, a 35-17 win for the Gray over the Scarlet, the first-year head coach's responses echoed his sentiments from the past five interview sessions throughout spring camp.

Upon the completion of the team's 15-practice stretch from March 6 to Saturday, Day didn't disclose his starter for the 2019 season — nor did he publicly acknowledge any separation between sophomore Justin Fields and redshirt freshman Matthew Baldwin.

"I don't really know right now," Day said. "I'm going to keep looking at it. I know I keep saying that to you and everybody wants to know, but I don't think right now that we're going to make a decision on (a starting quarterback). I think it will continue through the preseason."

While neither signal caller established consistency — Fields and Baldwin both turned in up-and-down passing performances — Day's comments throughout the past month of spring camp have been transparent about the big-picture process of replacing Dwayne Haskins.

OSU's 2018 starter shattered single-season records last fall because he was a "once-in-a-lifetime" talent, as Day said Feb. 6, and filling his shoes won't be an overnight fix — regardless of whether Haskins' replacement is Fields or Baldwin.

Fields was Ohio State's first quarterback out in the spring game, completing 4 of 13 passes (30.8 percent) for 131 yards and one touchdown — a 98-yard catch and run from senior wide receiver Binjimen Victor — while adding eight rushes for 38 yards (4.8 average) and a five-yard touchdown.

“I think that they both did a good job today,” Day said of Fields and Baldwin, who completed 20 of 36 passes (55.6 percent) for 246 yards and two touchdowns to two interceptions in the “thud” scrimmage. “They both flashed at times, still a work in progress. We’ve still got work to do, but I thought that they gave some of the receivers a chance at times. Sometimes it’s hard when you’re not in the tackle situation — is it a sack? Is it not? Do we break out?”

“Justin can kind of create on the edge a little bit, so didn’t get a chance to see that as much. I thought Matthew made a couple really nice throws down the field. We turned the ball over and threw it to them, which is good for the defense. So we’ll keep looking at it, but I thought both of them had positive days.”

Baldwin’s two touchdown throws — the first an 18-yard fade to freshman wide receiver Garrett Wilson and the second an eight-yard cross to fifth-year senior H-back C.J. Saunders — flashed his ability in the pocket as he sat back with time and delivered.

He fell victim to two interceptions — the first by junior safety Jahsen Wint and the second by junior safety Amir Riep — in his Buckeyes debut at the Horseshoe after spending the past 15 months recovering from a torn ACL.

As the competition continues into fall camp, a theme seen across several other position groups, Day and his offensive coaching staff add performances from Fields and Baldwin into OSU’s offseason study.

“This is just the first step from this season,” he said. “We’ve got a lot of work to do. We got a good team though, I think. And I think that this is part of the season. We then have this offseason, the summer, preseason, and so we’ll just keep building from here. But there’s a lot of good pieces, a lot of good leadership starting to form out there. And we tried to get a lot of the guys who have played a lot of reps out of there earlier on, so sometimes it’s hard to tell. But the overall spring was excellent. The energy was really good. I thought guys got tougher. It was a physical spring.”

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