

Ryan Day Touches On Roster Construction In The Era Of NIL



Like every other program in college football, Ohio State has had to adapt to the changes brought to the sport as a result of the introduction of athletes profiting off their name, image and likeness.

NIL legislation entered college sports in July of 2021 and has largely been a free-for-all as a result of limited policing from the NCAA and other governing bodies in college sports. To Ohio State head coach Ryan Day, NIL has also changed how he views roster construction, noting that it has added a different element to how he builds his team.

At an OSU2U event on Thursday, Day said that NIL caused him and his staff to rethink how they approach recruiting, in order to maintain the program's culture, while also trying to build the most talented roster they possibly can.

"It's something that I was very concerned with," Day said. "We have to continue a high level of play. We have to make sure that we have enough talent on the roster to compete with everybody in the country. But at the same time, the locker room is the most important thing.

"There were several situations that we had to walk away from last year because of that very situation," he continued. "To bring somebody into the locker room that may be very talented or highly touted, but how can I look some of these guys in the eye and say, 'Oh yeah, we just brought him in when he hasn't played one down. Yet, look at the opportunities he's going to have.' That doesn't work that way."

Although NIL has impacted some decisions regarding roster management for Day, he recognized that the goal is to still put together the best team possible in order to compete for a national championship.

"At the same time, we still have to make sure we're bringing in the best players in the country," Day said. "There's a balance there. But I think a big part of it is the locker room we have now, the type of people that we're bringing in, and bringing them in with not the number one goal in mind being NIL. Getting (money) is fair, but at the same time, not being money hungry.

"That's something, for me, that I've really kept an eye on, trying to approach very carefully," he continued. "I think you see across the country that it's not like that at some places and you're going to see the ramifications of that moving forward."

Day also likened the current landscape of roster building in the era of NIL to how teams are constructed in the NFL, pointing to differences in salary based on performance at the professional level.

“I think animosity comes when people feel like it’s not fair,” Day said. “If you’re on an NFL roster and Patrick Mahomes is there and he’s making whatever he’s making, no one is going to feel animosity because Pat Mahomes is getting what he deserves.

“I think it’s the same thing with these kids,” he continued. “If they’re getting what they deserve and they’re getting what’s fair, then they’re OK.”

The introduction of NIL has also brought a new element into locker rooms, with envy regarding deals potentially sneaking into a team’s psyche. However, Buckeye wide receiver Emeka Egbuka noted that the tightness displayed in Ohio State’s locker room has elevated above any negative factor that could arise from NIL.

“When we’re in the locker room and having discussions about NIL and whatnot, we’re not really discussing the specifics or how much people are making,” Egbuka said. “Obviously, there’s going to be people you know that are getting more money than you or people that are not making as much. With NIL, I think there is room for animosity and bad blood, but I think that comes with a team that’s not as tight as we are.

“When one person wins, we all win,” he continued. “There’s no bad blood, there’s no animosity between us. We’re all just happy to see each other have this type of opportunity and success.”