

What Might Tate Martell Have Brought As Ohio State QB? ‘He Loves Hate’



Throughout the four months of the 2018 season, Dwayne Haskins lit college football on fire en route to becoming one of three Heisman Trophy finalists and shattering Ohio State/Big Ten single-season records, steamrolling momentum as the top quarterback eligible for the 2019 NFL draft.

Behind the sophomore starter, redshirt freshman Tate Martell served as the Buckeyes' backup and showed flashes in his spurts of appearances. He completed 23 of 28 (82.1 percent) passes for 269 yards and one touchdown, adding 22 rushes for 128 yards and two touchdowns in six games.

As momentum mounted for Haskins to the NFL draft, of which he announced his declaration Jan. 7, Martell appeared next in line to take over OSU's offense. Even as rumors swirled of Justin Fields coming to Columbus, Martell stood his ground when he was asked directly about the Georgia transfer.

"The reason I have never left this school, after everything I have done and all the time I have put in, is because I love my teammates," Martell said. "That is what has really kept me here at this point."

Time changes things — and sometimes quickly. Fields announced his switch to Ohio State Jan. 4 and Martell entered his name in the NCAA portal Jan. 10, leading Martell to Miami (Fla.) and reuniting with two Las Vegas Bishop Gorman teammates in tight end Brevin Jordan and safety Bubba Bolden.

What does Martell — the 247Sports composite's No. 56 overall prospect, No. 2 dual threat and No. 2 player in Nevada as a former four-star recruit for the 2017 class — bring to the Hurricanes and what might the Buckeyes miss out on? Junior defensive lineman Haskell Garrett, who also came to OSU from Bishop Gorman as a member of the 2017 recruiting class, looked forward to the possibility of Martell as Haskins' successor.

"The thing is, he loves hate," Garrett told BSB. "(Martell) actually would rather play in an opponent's stadium than his own stadium because he loves when people hate on him and he loves the haters. He loves being able to fuel his fire."

Sophomore offensive lineman Josh Myers, who played center on Ohio State's second-team offense with Martell for most of 2018 as a redshirt freshman, detailed the improvement he saw out of his quarterback dating back to fall camp. Working with the Buckeyes' first-team offense, Myers said Martell

put on a show.

“When I really saw Tate turn it on, there was one day in fall camp this year that I saw him play and I was like, ‘Wow,’” Myers told BSB. “I was like, ‘Wow, this kid is balling right now.’”

“He was running with the first team. During camp, they’ll kind of rotate guys around, get them used to the different lines and stuff. Tate was running with the first team and took off and ran the ball for a 20-yard gain and then hurried on offense.

“We ran up on the ball and he threw a 40-yard bomb for a touchdown. It was just perfectly in stride and it was good coverage. I was just like, ‘Wow.’”

Martell managed to flash his natural dual-threat ability and improved arm strength during OSU’s blowout wins earlier in the fall. He went 10 of 10 (100.0 percent) for 121 yards and one touchdown through the air, adding eight rushes for 95 yards and one touchdown on the ground Sept. 8 in Ohio State’s 52-3 rout of Rutgers.

Heading to Miami as he reportedly fights for immediate eligibility in 2019, Martell competes with sophomores N’Kosi Perry and Cade Weldon on top of redshirt freshman Jarren Williams. As the Buckeyes continue with Fields — who is projects as OSU’s starter in 2019, dependent on immediate eligibility — with redshirt freshman Matthew Baldwin and fifth-year senior Chris Chugunov filling out the three scholarship quarterbacks, what if Martell stayed?

“(Martell) was obviously a really good player coming in,” Myers said. “He’s gifted athletically and is just a great football player.”

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