

Big Ten Football Media Days

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Ohio State Buckeyes

Coach Ryan Day

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Coach Day, we'll begin with your opening statement.

RYAN DAY: Good afternoon, everybody. Honored to be here today.

I just want to, first off, thank Tony for his leadership. Probably heard that from some of the other coaches already, but it's been significant as we've gone over the last couple of months and where we're going.

Had some great meetings out in L.A., and certainly it was easy to see leaving those meetings his leadership and how strong he's been and where we're heading with all the changes that are going on across college football. So had great conversation with him, and very excited about our leadership in the Big Ten as we move forward.

It's an exciting time right now to be at Ohio State. As we've transitioned from Gene to Ross as our Athletic Director, it's been great to spend time with Ross. I certainly want to welcome him into the family again and really know that he's got a great group behind him.

We're very, very excited that he's going to be our leader in the Athletic Department as we move forward in 36 sports and as we head into the fall. It's been great spending time with him in this transition as he takes over for Gene.

He has great experience. He's already connected well with a lot of our players and a lot of the staff that's there. I think he has a really bright future at Ohio State.

I just want to quickly mention as you head into the preseason, this time of year is a funky time because you go from spending a little bit of time with your family to now going into the preseason. My family means so much to me as we head into the season. I just want to quickly mention my family. Certainly my wife, Nina, and what she's done for me.

This is going into our sixth year as the head coach of Ohio State. As we head into the season, she's been an

unbelievable rock and been unbelievably supportive along the way.

My three children: RJ heads into his sophomore year. He will be playing quarterback at DeSales High School. Excited to see what that brings for him.

My wife, Nina, will be the most stressed out person in Columbus as it starts at about noon on Friday and goes into Friday night football and then we have the game on Saturday. There's a lot that goes with that.

Then my two daughters, Grace and Nia, who are working hard at basketball. Certainly I had an opportunity to spend a bunch of time with them this summer.

As we head into the preseason, it's an exciting preseason for us. It's been a great summer. The team that we have right now is working with urgency. They're working with purpose.

It started with the guys that decided to come back. Three of them are here today. It was very difficult to name three guys to come. I mean, it's virtually impossible to do, but we did it. We figured these three guys are a great representation of who we have, but by no means do they stick out more than the other guys.

There's 12 guys who decided that they wanted to come back and play this year. They wanted to forego their opportunity to go to the NFL and come back and leave something behind at Ohio State.

Since they made that decision, through the winter and the spring, now in the summer as we head into preseason camp, you can see it. You can see the look in their eye. It's a special group. Then the pieces that we've added, we're very, very excited right now.

It's a fun group to be around every day. Coach Mick has been doing a great job and some of the workouts that we've had this summer, but now as we head into the preseason camp, it's going to be critically important to build a foundation.



Every year you rebuild a team. You don't just jump back to where you were the year previous. We're going to work really hard to have a physical preseason camp and build that foundation as that's going to be what's going to be the difference in the end.

Denzel Burke is one of the first guys that are here. Denzel has already had a tremendous career at Ohio State and made that decision, like one of the other guys, to come back and play his senior year.

Denzel has already played a high level of football, but he's going to be one of the best corners in America. He's shown great leadership. He's made great strides as a player, but also just in his maturity.

We were talking on the plane ride over here about how you approach preseason camp a lot different now in his point of his career than he would as a freshman. He's much more intentional with everything he does. I think he has a chance to be the best corner in America next season.

Emeka Egbuka, I can't say enough about who Emeka is. He's an old soul. Since he has been here, he's been a warrior. He has his degree. He had to make his decision on whether he wanted to go to the NFL or not. He decided to come back with a degree in hand. We didn't get to see the best version of him last season with his ankle injury, but we're seeing it now.

He's always been a leader. He's been a leader since he walked in the building as a freshman, but now he gets an opportunity to do that as a senior.

Then, lastly, is Jack Sawyer. A lot of people lead different ways. Jack leads by his actions. It started off by being one of the first guys to commit to me in the class as a head coach and recruiting that class, but also, decided to come back this year. He was one of the first. Sat down with he and his dad, Lyle. They said they have unfinished business here. They started to get the guys to come back and build that group together that wanted to come back and leave a legacy behind.

So being a Buckeye means a lot to him being from Ohio. He's going to continue to lead. He's playing his best football. Did at the end of the season and will continue to do. Had a great offseason.

These three guys are here. They're unbelievable representatives of Ohio State and proud that they're a part of our team.

The last thing I'll just say and then I'll open it up to questions is that our focus is on this preseason. It's the

next step. Sure, a lot of coaches will say it. You can't really focus on what happened the year before. You can't get too worried about what's coming down the road, but we all know there's a lot of noise and a lot of hype around this team.

What we can't do is let those distractions grab our focus from what we need to do day in and day out. We know it's going to be a long season, but we have to have a great preseason. We have to have a physical preseason. We have to lay that foundation for what's going to come as we head throughout the season.

We're very, very excited about our guys. We have great experience in that locker room and some great talent. It's going to take more than talent. It's going to take all the no-talent issues to get to where we want to be and reach our goals.

I appreciate everybody, and I'll open it up to questions.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. I want to ask about your offensive line entering camp. How do you feel about your O-line overall entering camp? And then, in addition to that, who do you expect will be your right guard or who are the guys competing there at right guard?

RYAN DAY: As you know, the O-line has been the area that we've been locked in on. I think that coming out of the summer, their bodies look different. I think you'll see them next week. We have some of the open camps, our days of camp.

They look good. Mick has done a great job with them. They've had a great summer. But we know how important that is. This team is going to go as the offensive line goes. This team is going to go as the defensive line goes. We know how important the offensive line is going to be.

I think that some guys have really stepped up. Josh Fryar, to me, has had an unbelievable summer. Donny has been much a leader.

When it comes to that right guard position, I think you're going to see Carson Hinzman and Seth, they both can swing between center and guard, but then Tegra Tshabola is someone that has had -- another guy who stepped up and had a good summer, Luke Montgomery.

We feel like we have decent guys in there that can fill that role. But we have to put it on the field now and see how this training and everything that happened this summer is going to translate to being on the field.

Q. I know you've talked about depth at receiver being a big part of what you need to accomplish in the preseason. I guess where do you feel you're at with that depth? And behind Emeka, who is kind of starting to emerge in that four-to-five-member group?

RYAN DAY: That's a great question. I feel like we have a good -- we're kind of top-heavy there. Then, okay, where is four, five, six, and seven?

Brandon Inniss. You feel Brandon Inniss when you are out there. This is going to be a great opportunity for him to do that.

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. Again, this is somebody that's been in our program now.

I think that's another part of this team is that we have is two, three, four. 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.

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.

Kojo Antwi is somebody that has to step up as well. And then we have some other young guys in there that have an opportunity to do that.

So that four, five, six, and seven is going to be critical in solidifying the wide receiver depth, but that's going to have to happen this preseason.

Q. Ryan, I was just wondering, have you told your team to embrace these expectations for this season? Number two, in your mind, how legit are these expectations?

RYAN DAY: Well, I think anytime you're at Ohio State, we know you're going to have expectations, but there's always going to be chatter. There's always going to be noise. It's our job to block all those things out and just focus on what really matters.

I think especially this time of year the easy thing to do is focus on the goals, focus on the end of the season, but

that's really a waste of time if we don't build a foundation right now.

Now, our guys, they know what the expectation is. You've heard some of them say what their goals are. We're not going to shy away from that. We want to win the rivalry game, be right in this stadium right here and win this Big Ten championship, win a National Championship. We know that. At the same time that can't be our focus because that's a distraction from where we are right now.

So where the season goes and what this team looks like will look a lot different than it did last year. This is a new journey. We have to rebuild that to get to where we need to be.

That started last winter. But the next step is now in preseason. And so we know what the expectation is. Every time I've gone into a season at Ohio State -- I guess this is going to be my eighth season now, sixth as the head coach -- you expect to win every game. That's just what it is. If you don't think that's the case, try losing a game at Ohio State. You're expected to win them all.

That's not new. We embrace it in recruiting, and we want to make sure those type of people are in our program.

Q. In delegating play-calling duties to Chip, obviously that's going to change your perspective on the game days and change your responsibilities on game day a little bit. How might that change the way you manage games on a situational basis?

RYAN DAY: I think this year there is a change with the two-minute warning. I think that's something we have to take into consideration, just how the things are going to change at the end of the game.

Other than that, I feel like I've always had a pretty good handle on that. Going into each game we'll have a game plan in place. Chip is here for a reason, to run the offense, but I think it's my job as the head coach to look on the horizon and figure out what's coming. In this conference I have experience of what's coming down the road, the games we need to win, how we need to win.

Also, with the type of players that we have. That will kind of be my input in the offense, knowing what we're doing. The great thing for he and I is we see things the same way, and we've been in the same offense together in our careers. I think there will be a lot of that.

Chip is one of the best offensive minds in the history of college football, in my opinion, and he's a great play-caller. He's got to do that. He just has to go and get a feel for our

guys and let them call it.

In terms of the management of the game, it will allow me the opportunity to be on both sides of the ball, including special teams, and have a great feel for that and making those decisions.

Q. Sticking with Chip, last few years I've been able to see his innovation and his creativity with players. Aside from that, how excited are you to see what he can do with this team, and what else does he bring to your program?

RYAN DAY: Well, I think when you look at any offense, what you are trying to do is trying to figure out what plays maximize the guys you have in the locker room. Chip has a background of doing things a lot of different ways. I think everyone immediately goes to the spread offense and when he was at Oregon and some of the no-huddle stuff.

He was at UCLA. You saw him do things with three tight ends in the game. Before that there was a lot of two-back stuff. There's a lot of different versatility in his background.

I think the idea is, all right, what fits our guys? It starts with the quarterback and then it goes to the offensive line, the running backs, the receivers, and how that all gets put together.

I think he would tell you he is very excited about what he has in terms of the talent level on the perimeter, up front, the running backs, the quarterback options, the tight ends. So that's the journey that we're on. You know, what is it that fits that?

Then it's my job as the head coach to make sure it fits complementary football across the board and that the offense is complementing the defense.

In terms of the second part of your question, what he brings, you know, for me turning it over, I really wanted to have somebody that had head coaching experience. Now, never thought that you would have somebody that was a head coach the way he has been in college and in the NFL and that background. It allows me a little more of a peace of mind and certainly a lot of trust there.

I trust Chip with my life, and that's a big part of any time you are handing something over like that that you have done almost your entire career.

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