FOOTBALL

The Les Wexner Football Complex at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center
535 Irving Schottenstein Dr. | Columbus, OH 43210-1166

August 17, 2018

Dear Buckeye Nation,

We are two full weeks into fall camp at The Ohio State University and tomorrow we'll be two weeks out from our season-opening game against Oregon State. I would like to take time at this midway point to provide you with some updates on the progress of the team and to thank you for your support.

You will be proud to know that our players and coaching staff have attacked each day and forged together as a team. Our program starts and ends with our players, and the leaders of this team are incredibly focused and determined to maximize our talents to be the best team possible when we line up on Sept. 1. The energy level the entire group has brought to each day is a testament to the work ethic and perseverance of our program. Our coaching staff has been outstanding driving the program during this camp. Coordinators Greg Schiano, Alex Grinch, Kevin Wilson and Taver Johnson (special teams) have been tirelessly pushing their staffs to maximize and develop our players. The team reported to camp strong, fast and powerful, which is a credit to the best strength and conditioning staff in America, led by Mick Marotti, and to our world class sports medicine staff.

The freshmen and the new walk-ons have really made a strong first impression. Tommy Togiai was the first member of the class to have his black stripe removed back in the spring, but since then we have watched as eight more young men have joined him with that honor: DL Taron Vincent, LB Teradja Mitchell, LB Dallas Gant, TE Tate Duarte, RB Brian Snead, QB Kory Curtis, WR Chris Olave and RB Amari McMahon.

While our main focus is improving on the field, we have also taken time to bond as a team. The only two-time Heisman Trophy winner, Mr. Archie Griffin, stopped by practice and shared words of encouragement. The comedian Sinbad spent an afternoon at the Woody. Our skit night was a big hit as we had some great impersonations of coach Taver Johnson (by Jeffrey Okudah) and Jay-Z (Alex Bidine). And last night, the team thoroughly enjoyed attending the Beyoncé and Jay-Z concert at Ohio Stadium.

We also held our annual family day this past Sunday which included brunch, a devotion by Roy Hall and pictures. It was evident by the turnout that the loyalty from our players' and coaches' families is unwavering and provides the support that drives our program.

With regard to our nine position groups, I'd like to provide an update on each:

Quarterbacks – This is a young group of talented quarterbacks. We have very big shoes to fill in replacing one of the most productive players in the history of college football. In our entire room, we have zero collegiate starts. That being said, Dwayne Haskins and Tate Martell have been putting in the work on and off the field to get themselves prepared for an excellent season. They both have been taking the majority of the reps in practice as freshman Matthew Baldwin is recovering from ACL surgery and won't be 100 percent for another couple of weeks. We can see the improvement by each of the QBs on a daily basis.

Running Backs – Led by Tony Alford, we have two returning 1,000-yard rushers in J.K. Dobbins and Mike Weber. Both are veterans and are having a productive camp. They are very deliberate with everything they do on the field and they haven't rested on their success at all. They are going hard every day, fighting to earn their reps. And, they love their teammates. They've been great in helping the younger guys acclimate to our culture. Master Teague and Brian Snead have both shown flashes of brilliance and are continually working toward consistency. Both have really bright futures.

Wide Receivers – This group continues to be full of leaders and is a very strong unit of quality young men. The upperclassmen – Parris Campbell, Johnnie Dixon, Terry McLaurin and K.J. Hill – have set the standard for work ethic on offense and we are expecting big things from them this season. Austin Mack, Binjimen Victor and C.J. Saunders have also been practicing at a high level, making this unit very deep. The depth continues to grow with the emergence of the true freshmen and younger players, including Chris Olave and Jaelen Gill. Kamryn Babb is on pace for a full recovery and is working daily with sports medicine on his rehab. Brain Hartline has embraced the new role of WR coach and has brought the "juice" each day.

Tight Ends – The tight ends have had a very competitive preseason camp so far and, even though we lost a quality player last year to the NFL, this year's group will be deeper and has a chance to be stronger than last year. Kevin Wilson has done a remarkable job developing Luke Farrell, Rashod Berry and Jake Hausmann over the past year and Jeremy Ruckert is a very talented freshman. Hausmann missed a few practices due to a hamstring injury but is back now and practicing well.

Offensive Line – Coach Greg Studrawa really likes working with this group of players. Led by Isaiah Prince, Demetrius Knox and Michael Jordan, the offensive line has been working every day to solidify the foundation of our offense. The competition within this unit has raised the level of play across the board as guys are battling for starting positions. Thayer Munford and Josh Alabi have been competing for the starting left tackle spot while Brady Taylor, Michael Jordan and Josh Myers have all been taking snaps at center. A bright spot has been the development of Malcolm Pridgeon at guard.

Defensive Line – No surprise to anyone in Buckeye Nation, Larry Johnson has another talented group this year. It doesn't take much to notice how close this unit is and the leadership from Nick Bosa, Dre'mont Jones, Robert Landers, Jashon Cornell, Davon Hamilton, Jonathan Cooper and Chase Young. We're really impressed with the young freshmen as well; there are some individuals in that freshman class who are positioning themselves to play this fall. Depth at this position group might be the strongest on the team.

Linebackers – Coach Billy Davis feels as if things are starting to fall into place with this inexperienced but talented linebacker corps. There are fierce competitions at all three positions. Baron Browning and Justin Hilliard are battling at Mike while Tuf Borland is recovering from his Achilles injury. At the Sam, Dante Booker and Pete Werner are all over the field making plays on a daily basis and Malik Harrison and Keandre Jones have both stepped up in their new roles. We're anxious to see how these final scrimmages and practices go before game week.

Cornerbacks – Taver Johnson is really enjoying being a Buckeye coach again. His position group has focused on being consistent with their technique and their understanding of how everything fits together with this defense. Damon Arnette and Kendall Sheffield are poised to continue the tradition of great Buckeye CB play. Jeffrey Okudah is coming along well and, after missing the spring due to injury, has come back strong and is using each snap to improve. Shaun Wade is really progressing as well. We are excited about this position group and all of the guys are working to be consistent in everything they do.

Safeties – First-year at Ohio State coach Alex Grinch feels it has been a very positive camp for his position group. Jordan Fuller, in particular, has established himself as a leader and as a playmaker on our defense. There has been excellent competition to determine who will be the starter opposite Fuller, between Isaiah Pryor and Jahsen Wint. Brendon White and Amir Riep are fueling the competition by showing up on film and making plays. The play of a couple of true freshmen – Josh Proctor and Marcus Hooker – has been encouraging.

Specialists – Through 12 fall camp practices, the specialist group has shown the promise of a group returning all four starters from the 2017 season. Field goal kicker Sean Nuernberger, punter Drue Chrisman, long snapper Liam McCullough and kickoff specialist Blake Haubeil have all embraced the competition of improvement this fall camp. With no specific playing time battles, the units have focused on consistency on operation time and kick placement. The field goal unit finished practice recently with a pressure "game-winning" kick made from 40 yards in the rain, leaving no doubt of the outcome. Chrisman and the punt team have continued to build off of the 2017 campaign when Chrisman ranked in the top five among returning punters for the 2018 season with an average of 44.2 yards per punt. Haubeil is working to improve on his 2017 season and with limited opportunities in fall camp for full kickoffs, he has been focused on improving in hang-time, distance and accuracy.

Camp ends tomorrow with a scrimmage and classes start on Tuesday. Our daily practice and preparation for the season will continue.

The two main driving forces behind our motivation is the 'brotherhood' and the standard of excellence that the former Buckeye players and teams have set before us. The 'brotherhood' is the love for our teammates, which is an unbreakable bond and the standard of excellence is a responsibility we take very seriously. We are honored to be Buckeyes and can't wait to see and hear you in the 'Shoe on September 1!

In closing, I would like to thank members of the Ohio State University Administration and Athletics Department for their guidance and support. I would also like to thank the members of the Ohio State media corps for their patience and understanding.

Go Bucks!



Ryan Day