

Meyer says he wants 'angry' Buckeyes next year

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By RUSTY MILLER

The Associated Press

COLUMBUS — The very last thing Urban Meyer wants from his second Ohio State team is for it to rest on the laurels of his first one.

"If they're not angry but complacent, this team is as average as dirt," Meyer said Monday when discussing what he wants from his 2013 team.

The Buckeyes ended their season prematurely on Saturday with a 26-21 victory over archrival Michigan, running the table in Meyer's first season back in his home state and back in coaching after a one-year hiatus.

Ohio State isn't going anywhere in the postseason due to NCAA sanctions stemming from the tattoo scandal which rocked the program of deposed coach Jim Tressel.

One thing Meyer will not abide in 2013 is a team that doesn't have an 'edge' to it. That's where this year's bowl ban might just enter the conversation.

"My concern here is complacency. We have to make sure that doesn't take place," he said. "We need an angry team next year. If we have to manufacture that, we will. Whether it's something

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was taken from them, we’re going to use that. We’re going to try to push the right buttons to get an angry team.”

He added, “Just like any team, if you don’t have a chip on your shoulder, you’ll lose like that.” For emphasis, he snapped his fingers twice.

Meyer has already met with his staff about how to light a fire under those returning from a surprising team that posted only the sixth perfect season in school history.

Incredibly, it followed a year in which the Buckeyes were only 6-7, the most losses at the school in a season since ’97 — 1897.

Many of the players — those who have used up their eligibility and those with plenty of time left — look at the season just completed as a waystation more than a milestone.

“It sets the standard pretty high,” departing wide receiver/tight end Jake Stoneburner said. “I don’t think anyone thought coach Meyer would come in and turn it around like he did. It’s crazy to think we went undefeated.”

The Buckeyes lose at least six starters on defense and three on offense, plus punter Ben Buchanan.

The major losses on offense are right tackle Reid Fragel and Stoneburner. On defense, Ohio State must replace lineman John Simon and fullback/linebacker Zach Boren— whom Meyer has called “the heart and soul of the team” — along with fellow linemen Garrett Goebel and Nathan Williams, linebacker Storm Klein, safety Orhian Johnson and cornerback Travis Howard.

“We have almost the whole offense coming back,” linebacker Ryan Shazier said. “We’re looking at a lot of new guys on defense but we have a lot of guys who are rotating in so it’s not like we’re throwing in a new, fresh person in there.”

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Defensive tackle Johnathan Hankins and cornerback Bradley Roby will likely look into leaving a year early to go into the NFL draft. Meyer said he will counsel them if and when they come to him.

Star quarterback Braxton Miller will likely be one of the Heisman Trophy front-runners next year as a junior. But he will also be challenged.

"If he becomes the best (in fundamentals) in America I think he will be the best quarterback in America," Meyer said. "It'll be comical what he'll do. But he's not there yet."

With an exemplary crop of seniors leaving, that means it's up to the rest to follow their lead.

Adolphus Washington, a freshman who forced a key fumble in the Michigan game, will likely take over for Simon.

"That was the hardest group of workers I've ever seen in my life," he said of the seniors. "It's a foundation to keep the tradition going, to just keep working hard."

Meyer, meanwhile, is energized by what his players accomplished. He had twice stepped aside while the head coach at Florida, citing health and family issues. Some thought he was another Type A personality who burned out.

He said he learned a lot from the faith and trust his players had in the coaches.

Meyer also said he had changed from the workaholic coach who was obsessed with his team and all but forgot about his family during a season.

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Before taking the Ohio State job, his two college-age daughters, Nicole and Gigi, his son in middle-school, Nate, and his wife, Shelley, made him sign a contract on a pink sheet of note paper that he wouldn't overdo it this time, that he would remember his personal life had precedence over his professional life.

"Every Sunday I busted out of here at noon and went and watched my son play football. That would have never happened (before)," he said.

He even has proof — two tickets he got for running stop lights to get to one of Nate's games.

"I was 15 minutes late and getting texts from my wife saying, 'You'd better get here.' So I went through a couple of red lights. That's 50 bucks or whatever it is," he said with a laugh. "Great story, isn't it?" __PUBLIC__