

B1G Coaches Teleconference: With New Starting QB, Maryland's Matt Canada Calls Ohio State 'Tremendous Challenge'



Near the end of Maryland's roller-coaster campaign, interim head coach and first-year offensive coordinator Matt Canada gets his team prepared for a "tremendous challenge" Saturday when he faces a tall task in Big Ten powerhouse Ohio State.

Ahead of senior day for the Terrapins (5-5, 3-4) with the No. 10 Buckeyes (9-1, 6-1) coming to Maryland Stadium in College Park, Md., for Saturday's noon kickoff on ABC, Canada fielded questions from reporters Tuesday on the Big Ten coaches teleconference.

With updates on UMD's starting quarterback and a take on OSU's defense, below are quotes and notes from Canada's session.

Matt Canada

- Maryland faces Ohio State after the Terrapins dropped two straight losses, the most recent coming Nov. 3 at Indiana in a 34-32 defeat against the Hoosiers. With the Buckeyes up next, Canada tries to turn the page for his team as he knows what type of task is about to arrive on campus.
 - "We're coming off a tough loss to Indiana, great win for them," Canada said. "Our kids played very hard. We just didn't make the plays we needed to make to win the football game, but certainly proud of how hard our guys played. Tremendous challenge this weekend against a very good Ohio State football team and excited for our seniors to be honored on senior day. We'll go out and play very hard, see what happens."
- Ohio State recorded its best win in weeks with Nov. 3 at Michigan State, where the Buckeyes rattled off 19 unanswered points in the second half to down the No. 18 Spartans (6-4, 4-3). Asked about junior linebacker Malik Harrison, Canada delved into what he considers from his film study to be an improved defense.
 - "I think they all stand out," Canada said. "I think that's the biggest part about when you play a football team like this, is they have such good players and obviously do a great job with scheme. Last week, they didn't let those guys move the ball. I think they're all very

good players. I think, as a football team, we have a tremendous challenge of trying to find a way to move the football a little bit. Obviously, you have to score points because then you look at the other side and they're explosive on offense. They've shown they can score a lot of points, so it'll be a tremendous challenge for us."

- Maryland's loss to Indiana was not its only casualty at Memorial Stadium in Bloomington, Ind., where starting redshirt freshman quarterback Kasim Hill tore the ACL in his left knee. Last year, he tore the ACL in his left knee. As a result, redshirt sophomore Tyrrell Pigrome takes over to finish the season for the Terrapins.
 - "I think Pig comes in and certainly gives us a running threat," Canada said. "He runs the ball and a little bit different player than Kasim is, but throws the ball very well. I thought he came in and played well Saturday. He's coming off a knee (injury) as well and thought he progressed through that and probably almost back to where he wanted to be but it certainly, as we all know, takes some time — especially for a runner — so he gives us that. He's played a lot of football. It's not like he's in the first game he's ever played, so he'll be able to do a good job. The kids respond to him very well."
- The tumultuous fall for Maryland — dating back to the summer when offensive lineman Jordan McNair died of heatstroke at an offseason workout, ultimately leading to the Oct. 31 firing of head coach DJ Durkin — winds down with the Terrapins on the precipice of bowl eligibility.
 - "Obviously, the loss of Jordan is just certainly, first and foremost, what we have dealt with as a program," Canada said. "Our kids have done such a very good job of being there for each other and I think leaning into each other and wanting to get there. We've kind of gone through all that together. I think our football players have done a great job of playing for each other and playing very hard, and we obviously haven't won as many as we've wanted to win, but that's always the case (when) we don't win them all. But I'm certainly proud of our guys and that's been the focal point."
- Two games left between Ohio State and Nov. 24 at Penn State stack the odds against Maryland as its attempt to reach bowl eligibility continues, but Canada keeps the players focused accordingly going into the Terrapins' tilt with the Buckeyes.
 - "All we can do is focus on today," Canada said. "That's been our mantra throughout the season, with everything that we've gone through, that let's enjoy the day, let's be together today, let's work hard today and every game's the most important game because it's the next one and that's where we are right now. Tremendous respect for Ohio State, tremendous respect for the program and what it's done over so many years. But obviously, we're just focused on this season and this game. We're going to go out and play the best we can and get excited to play. Not everybody gets the opportunity to play a ranked opponent, not everybody gets the opportunity to play college football, so our guys realize how fortunate they are and they're going to embrace and be excited about it."

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