

BSB Predictions: Ohio State Stays Undefeated With Statement Road Victory At No. 3 Oregon



After five blowout wins to open the season, No. 2 Ohio State faces a monumental challenge in Week 7 when it travels nearly 2,500 miles Northwest to take on No. 3 Oregon at Autzen Stadium. This is a historic matchup on many levels, as it is the first game between the two college football powerhouses as Big Ten rivals, as well as the first-ever top-five matchup held at Oregon's home stadium, not to mention the game having significant College Football Playoff and Big Ten implications.

With the anticipation for this game seemingly rising with every passing hour, here are our Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff predictions for Ohio State at Oregon, set for a primetime 7:30 p.m kickoff on NBC. Head to BuckeyeSports.com every Friday for the latest staff predictions.

Patrick Engels:

Ohio State Grounds Ducks on Road

With the sound of 54,000 rowdy Ducks fans reigning down on them and millions of fans across the country tuning in, the pressure is on for Ohio State and head coach Ryan Day to get the job done and come away with a signature road win.

Winning on the road against a top-three powerhouse team like Oregon is certainly not an easy task, but luckily for the Buckeyes, they have all the ingredients needed to pull it off.

For Ohio State, that begins with its elite run game, which, under offensive play caller Chip Kelly, has been one of the best in the country through the first five games of the season. Oregon poses a formidable defensive front, led by senior defensive end Jordan Burch — who has certainly caught the Buckeyes attention all week — but if Chip Kelly can get Burch and co. off-balanced by calling some creative run designs for the electric running back duo of TreVeyon Henderson and Quinshon Judkins, Ohio State can control the pace and tempo of this game and keep the ball out of Dillon Gabriel's hands, while simultaneously keeping the crowd out of the game as well.

But in order for Ohio State to pull that off, the offensive line is going to need to get the job done and set the tone. It's going to be impossible to fully limit the production of Oregon's defensive line — they should make a few key impact plays on the night — but I do think that Buckeyes' unit is coming into the matchup with a bit of an edge after all the criticism they faced last year and will do enough for the team

to establish the run.

This will also allow quarterback Will Howard to set up a successful play-action game, which should keep Oregon's also ultra-talented secondary on its toes and lead to some open completions for Ohio State's most explosive offensive playmakers. I could see Emeka Egbuka serving as Howard's top target against the Ducks — similar to how he was with Kyle McCord last season at Notre Dame — while Jeremiah Smith should get his chance to find the end zone again on some deep balls.

Another key for Ohio State is its strong defense. Aside from some early-game lapses against Marshall and Michigan State, the Buckeyes have been as solid as any unit this year, and they come in with great confidence after bullying Iowa at home. But Oregon is obviously a completely different animal on offense than Oregon, and that is led by Gabriel and his electric wide receiver Tez Johnson.

Much like with Oregon's defensive line, it'll be impossible to fully contain Gabriel and the Ducks' offense, but if they can limit their explosive plays and keep those speedy wideouts in front of them, they should be in good shape to compete. Ohio State's linebackers and safeties should be a key X-factor in this game, as they will be tested in a big way when having to go up against star Oregon tight end Terrance Ferguson, who is Gabriels' Cade Stover-like safety blanket when things go wrong.

Another X-factor could be Ohio State's defensive line, who should have the edge against a Ducks line who has already gone through some change this season, most notably at the center position where Iapani Laloulu has taken over as the starter the last few games. I could see Tyliek Williams having a strong game on the inside.

In all, Ohio State certainly has what it takes to go on the road and come away with this win, but in the end, it will come down to who executes down the stretch the most. If the Buckeyes can avoid giving up big momentum-swinging plays — such as a Howard interception or a Johnson punt return touchdown — and control the pace of the game, I see them coming back to Columbus with a hard-fought signature home victory. I'll take Ohio State holding on to a three-point lead at the end of the game, then sealing it down with a late explosive score to put it away. **Ohio State 27, Oregon 17**

Bobby Gorbett:

Ohio State Picks Up Huge Road Win Over Oregon

Perhaps it's because of the relatively weak schedule the Buckeyes have faced to this point or the way the schedule has seemed to ramp up in difficulty after each passing week, but it truly feels like everything Ohio State has done to this point has been leading up to its monumental matchup against Oregon.

I think the 'keys to the game' phrase is a bit overused in what players and coaches have described as a 'matchup game' because every player and coach will be of vital importance to their team, but I'll have my eye on two essential aspects of this game.

Maybe the biggest surprise of the season to this point for Ohio State has been its offensive line. What had been a glaring weakness in 2023 has become a massive strength. There's a lot to be said about Ohio State's soft schedule through five games, but one cannot critique the Iowa rush defense. A Hawkeye front seven that, at least on paper, had been a really strong unit going into Week 6 was pushed around by Ohio State to the tune of over 200 rushing yards.

This is most likely what is keeping Oregon head coach and defensive guru Dan Lanning awake at night. It shouldn't be breaking news to anyone who kept tabs on the Oregon vs. Boise State game that the Ducks defense has been far from perfect against the run. Against Boise State, the Ducks gave up 220 yards on the ground for 6.7 yards per carry in a 37-34 win.

Of course, Boise State is led by perhaps the best running back in the country and a bona fide Heisman candidate in Ashton Jeanty, but running backs Treveyon Henderson and Quinshon Judkins are at least nearly as talented as Jeanty is.

On the flip side, if there has been a slight vulnerability in the Ohio State defense, it's been defending the pass. On paper, the Buckeyes' passing yards allowed numbers are among the best in the country, but considering the caliber of passing attacks the team has faced to this point, it's hard to say the secondary has faced a true test. As talented as Aidan Chiles may be as of right now, he pales in comparison to what the Buckeyes will face in Oregon quarterback Dillon Gabriel. Additionally, the plethora of weapons in the Ducks' arsenal won't just put senior cornerback Denzel Burke under the spotlight but also cornerbacks Davison Igbinosun and Jordan Hancock.

Going up against a tight end as good as Oregon's Terrance Ferguson, linebackers Cody Simon and Sonny Styles will also need great performances in coverage.

I think both offenses present difficult matchups for the opposing defenses. but while I know Oregon has struggled to stop the run, I think Ohio State can force enough stops to come out with a triumphant victory.

Ohio State 38, Oregon 28

Greg Wilson:

Buckeyes Pass Big Road Test Against Oregon

There has been a lot of criticism against Ohio State's schedule to this point in the season, and to a point it has been fair. The three nonconference games it played were a cakewalk. The games against Michigan State and Iowa weren't much different, with the Buckeyes starting slow in the first half and turning it on in the final 30 minutes.

The two Big Ten games can't be held against them since they didn't choose which teams they would play and when for their conference schedule, but one thing that can be said about Ohio State, even though it has had an easy schedule, is that it has taken care of business every single time. There hasn't been a single scare.

Oregon had two nonconference games come down to the final quarter, a 37-34 win over now-No. 17 Boise State and a 24-14 win over FCS Idaho. The Ducks have since figured it out and have been as dominant as they were expected to be, but there have been holes in their game that have been exposed. Ryan Day, Chip Kelly and Jim Knowles are going to know how to expose those holes. It's just going to be up to the players to execute.

Will Howard has done everything that has been needed out of him, but on Tuesday he said something to the extent of his running game not being fully unleashed yet, and they have a lot more up their sleeve. If that's the case, there's no better time to bring those tricks out than against the No. 3 team in the

country in a game that could have major implications on both the Big Ten title and the College Football Playoff seeding.

The Ducks' defense has been very strong early in the season, and the Buckeyes' offense is going to need to establish the run early to open up the passing game, something Quinshon Judkins and TreVeyon Henderson should be able to do if the offensive line is really as improved as it has seemed to be so far.

Dillon Gabriel has a lot of experience in college football and is going to be able to pick apart the Buckeyes defense better than any quarterback has for the past couple of years has been able to. Oregon will be happy to take short gains to work its way down the field to score, keeping the ball out of the hands of OSU's explosive offense as much as it can.

I believe the Buckeyes will rise to the occasion. **Ohio State 27, Oregon 24**