

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Predictions: Ohio State vs. Alabama



After a season filled with cancellations, close calls and seven wins, Ohio State is back in the national championship game for the first time since the 2014 season.

That year, the Buckeyes also faced Alabama in the College Football Playoff Semifinal, and this year the Crimson Tide are the final team they have to take down to win the first national title in the Ryan Day era.

Ohio State is currently listed as an 8.5-point underdog on Bovada, and the Buckeye Sports Bulletin staff – Wyatt Crosher, Joe Dempsey, Andrew Lind and Patrick Mayhorn – all think the Buckeyes will keep it closer than that line, but are not unanimous on who will end the night on a victory.

WC: “When Ohio State took on Clemson, I thought it would be a good game, but that the Tigers simply had too much firepower to be stopped. I was wrong then, and I think if the Buckeyes play like they did on Jan. 1, they will end tonight as national champions.

“But Alabama is a better team than Clemson, especially offensively, and I expect Mac Jones and Devonta Smith to run rampant against this Ohio State secondary. On the other side though, the Crimson Tide’s defense isn’t necessarily a monster, and Justin Fields should be able to put some big time numbers on the board himself.

“As many have said it would be, I am predicting a high-scoring affair, one that will break the national title record of 85 points set by Alabama and Clemson in 2016. This should be a fun, back-and-forth matchup between two phenomenal offenses, and I think the game is a true coin flip.

“I will go with the team that I think has a little more talent to close out the game down the stretch, and for my money, that is Jones, Najee Harris and, more specifically, Smith, who will lead Alabama to a win in what should be a phenomenal football game.

“Is my score prediction ridiculous? Probably, but let’s just call me hopeful on how many points will be scored tonight.”

Alabama 52, Ohio State 49

JD: “First of all, it’s nice to see the best two teams in the country squaring off for national supremacy, because that does not happen every year. Secondly, it’s great that the matchup is Alabama and Ohio State.

“The Crimson Tide have been ranked No. 1 at some point in each of the past 13 seasons, winning five national titles during that span. Even with all that recent success, the 2020 Alabama team may be more explosive than those successful teams of the past.

“Fortunately for Ohio State, Nick Saban’s squad has not seen anyone on the Buckeyes’ level this season. Alabama does not enter the national championship devoid of big wins, having defeated SEC foes Texas A&M, Georgia, and Florida, but those teams quite frankly do not stack up with Ryan Day’s group.

“The Buckeyes bring a high-powered offense and improved defense to Miami for what could be a high-scoring affair in the CFP final. Justin Fields is one of the best college quarterbacks of all time, and he will get to further prove it in presumably his final game. Fields’ primary weapons Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson will challenge Patrick Surtain II and the talented Crimson Tide secondary, and tailback Trey Sermon will continue his stellar postseason run.

“Defensively, Ohio State will have its hands full with Heisman Trophy winner DeVonta Smith and standout tailback Najee Harris. Heisman finalist quarterback Mac Jones will look to Smith as his primary target in a key matchup with cornerback Shaun Wade. The Buckeyes will need to be able to bend but not break against the Tide, similarly to how they did against the Tigers.

“Ohio State’s offense will overpower Alabama in the end.”

Ohio State 48, Alabama 42

AL: “The parallels between Ohio State’s run in the inaugural College Football Playoff National Championship and this year’s season-ending stretch are uncanny. Trey Sermon doing his best Ezekiel Elliott impression, while Justin Fields has shown off his Cardale Jones-like cannon and toughness.

“Not to mention, the Buckeyes will have faced the top three vote-getters for the Heisman Trophy once again after tonight’s game. And, just like in January 2015, I think Ohio State will score the same number of points in the national championship game as it did the semifinal to take home its second title of the CFP era.

“Alabama is a far better opponent than Oregon was in that year’s final, but I believe the Buckeyes will be able to impose their will along the offensive line and create just enough pressure in the defense front to make the Crimson Tide settle for a field goal late in a shootout.

“While Alabama does have just as many weapons as, if not more than, Ohio State, I haven’t been all that impressed with Crimson Tide quarterback Mac Jones overall. He gets away with letting his running back and receivers do the bulk of the work. It’ll be hard for the Buckeyes to get to him given how quickly he gets rid of the ball, but one sack might make all the difference.”

Ohio State 49, Alabama 45

PM: “I’m not sure that I can remember the last Ohio State game that seemed as even as this one does. Alabama has been dominant all season long, specifically on offense, but Ohio State’s performance

against Clemson was maybe the best from any team this season.

“That makes this very hard to call. On one hand, you have the consistent excellence of Alabama. This offense is as good as any that I’ve ever seen in college football, and I don’t think that Ohio State has any good answer for either Devonta Smith or Najee Harris. The Crimson Tide should be able to score essentially at will on a shaky Buckeye defense.

“But then we have that playoff performance from the Buckeyes again. When Justin Fields, this offensive line and Trey Sermon all play that well, Ohio State can essentially name its points total while grinding out the clock at the same time. The Alabama defense is not much better than what Ohio State has to offer.

“So, this one likely comes down to the margins - things like turnovers and time of possession. That’s a pretty tough thing to predict. It’s essentially a coin flip, and because of that, I’m just going to ride the hot hand. Ohio State was better against the Tigers than Alabama was against Notre Dame.”

Ohio State 52, Alabama 49

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