

Buckeyes Hoping For Improvement In Off Week



The Buckeyes do not play an opponent in week 3 of the college football season, but that doesn't mean the players get a week's worth of rest. In his press conference on Tuesday, head coach Ryan Day, made his goals for the week crystal clear to the reporters in attendance.

"For this week, we're calling it an improvement week because we need to continue to improve," Day said. "Everybody else in the country is playing this week for the most part, so we have to as well. We have to get each other better. Each player is going to be given things that they need to improve upon by their position coach. "

"We're going to work hard to go out there in practice and work on our fundamentals but also look at things that we may need to project out on both sides of the ball, all three phases. I mean that's the number one thing this week is that we have to stay in rhythm."

Whatever the open week is called, it certainly isn't the most opportune time for the Buckeyes to skip a week of playing football. The Buckeyes have been untested through just two weeks of football going against MAC schools and to this point the team remains relatively healthy. Part of the reason for the early off week is because the Buckeyes have two of them during the season.

With Labor Day coming a bit earlier than usual this year, having been on Sept. 2 and Thanksgiving being five days later than it was last year, there's an extra week built into the college football season.

The Buckeyes' second open week will be after the Oregon game in week 7. Having a separate week off later in the season is part of why Day and the coaching staff have a sense of urgency now.

"When you look at it, you don't usually have two bye weeks... especially this early in the season," Day said. "These guys are hungry, they don't want to rest right now."

"They feel like they have momentum coming out of this game. At the same time, we're not going to practice on Saturday or Friday, so they do get an opportunity to catch their breath. But we are going to work Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday because they understand how important this is and how early it is into the season."

"They don't want to lose their edge either. They know they have to get better. When you have a group of

veteran guys who understand that we're only two games in. we've got a long way to go, they get that, they embrace it."

As Day and the Buckeyes coaching staff have come to understand, the new rules have created a new college football landscape, one that puts players in a position to capitalize off their name, image and likeness. Day was asked about the possibility of certain players partaking in those opportunities during potential free time in the bye week, but he emphasized what he thought their priorities should be.

"When it comes to off-the-field stuff, I mean it comes out of time management and these guys understand that what the main thing is right now," Day said. "And during the offseason, there are certainly great opportunities, but unless it's something that's really pressing, these guys need to take care of academics first and then football and the other stuff will come down the road."

Back on the field, the Buckeyes haven't played a Power Four opponent to this point, but as Day pointed out there are some advantages to the 40+ point leads they've created in both games, including improved metrics, which the Buckeyes could reap the benefits of come playoff times. Additionally, though, the Buckeyes have gotten to test their depth at several positions on both sides of the ball, something Day hopes to continue throughout the open week.

"We'll get the guys who are ones and twos and the older guys some reps, but they know how important it is when senior cornerback Denzel Burke gets taken out of the game that sophomore cornerback Jermaine Mathews Jr. has to step up in the game," Day said. "That's just one example, redshirt freshman offensive lineman Austin Siereveld had to play the first couple of games because senior left guard Donovan Jackson was out, redshirt freshman linebacker Arvell Reese was thrust into duty."

"I think you saw guys at the end of the game like freshman cornerback Aaron Scott had his hands on some balls, you saw (freshmen running backs Sam Williams-Dixon and James Peoples) run well, you saw freshman safety Jaylen McClain make a tackle for loss."

"So we need to continue to work to get better, we have a long way to go, but that includes the older guys too. These guys want to get better and continue to work on it."