

Column: Dallan Hayden Deserves Chance To Shine After Ground Attack Struggles Against Penn State



Ohio State's rushing attack was unable to find any sort of success against Penn State, averaging just 1.9 yards per carry with Miyan Williams and Chip Trayanum leading a mostly ineffective ground game while TreVeyon Henderson missed his third-consecutive contest.

But in those struggles for Ohio State - which, as a whole, has averaged just 127.0 yards per game, ranking 99th nationally and 10th in the Big Ten - the answer appears to have been sitting on the bench for most of this season.

Sophomore Dallan Hayden has appeared in just two games this season, rushing for 79 yards on 11 carries and a touchdown - all coming against Purdue - as Ohio State head coach Ryan Day has remained insistent on preserving an additional year of eligibility for Hayden, which could become useful should Ohio State lose any combination of Henderson, Trayanum and Williams after this season.

"We're still going to do what we think is best to win every game," Day said on Oct. 17. "And it was great to see Dallan run out there and play well in the game (at Purdue). When that decision has to be made, we'll make that decision. That decision doesn't have to be made right now, because we still have a little bit more wiggle room. But if it comes down to winning games, then certainly, we'll sit down with Dallan and make sure we're all on the same page. But I know Dallan wants to play and Dallan wants to do what's best for himself, but also for Ohio State."

But if Ohio State was interested in redshirting Hayden, it should have done so last season instead of him seeing action against teams like Arkansas State and Toledo, which led to him burning his year of eligibility through just five games. It turned into an impressive season, finishing with 553 yards on 11 carries for five touchdowns, and showed a glimpse of what he can be for the Buckeyes.

And in limited action this year, he has only seemed to improve, averaging a team-high 6.9 yards per carry and generally rushing with a physicality and grittiness that Ohio State has otherwise lacked. He

could have been especially useful against Penn State when Williams and Traynum were unable to get anything going, and there will certainly be games later in this season where Hayden can be used, especially if Henderson remains out with an undisclosed injury.

While Ohio State's pursuit to save Hayden's redshirt season is an admirable one, it appears to be coming at the expense of the team at this point, with Hayden showing that, if he isn't one of the best rushing options on the team, that he at least might be what is best for the Buckeyes right now. But if Ohio State is set on preserving Hayden's redshirt - which seems to be the case after sitting him against Penn State - then make sure to use his two remaining games wisely, and hope he doesn't need to knock off any rust.