

Column: Kyle McCord Remains Best Option For Ohio State Moving Forward



Fans and media alike have taken the opportunity to tee off on quarterback Kyle McCord over the past couple of days, and it is easy considering he offered up the only two turnovers of the game for either side in Ohio State's 30-24 loss to Michigan, a game that had even thinner margins than the final score tells.

But beyond the first-quarter interception - a bad one, for the record - McCord is the only reason Ohio State was able to stay in the game with Michigan otherwise taking care of business against the Buckeyes' defense, which had been vaunted right until The Game kicked off.

Between McCord's two interceptions - the latter caused by left guard Donovan Jackson falling down and sending a free rusher at McCord, who impacted him as he released the ball - the junior completed 16 of 24 passes for 251 yards and two touchdowns, including a stretch from the second to third quarter in which he completed 10 of 11 passes.

It was an impressive bounce back for McCord, as an early interception in Michigan Stadium - in front of over 110,000 fans, no less - would have wilted most other signal callers for the rest of the contest. But he came back and was sharp throughout the game, including nine gains of at least 14 yards as well as a 3-yard touchdown to Emeka Egbuka. And despite an ill-fated decision by head coach Ryan Day to attempt to run out the clock late in the second quarter, McCord had more than done his job to get the Buckeyes in position, completing 4 of 5 passes on the drive for 61 yards.

"He's going to continue to fight," wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. said after the game. "Whether things are going good or bad, he's going to continue to fight. That's the motto of our program. He's done a tremendous job handling everything that comes with being the starting quarterback at Ohio State. There's so much pressure and expectations, and he's done a phenomenal job all year handling that. I'm super proud of him.

"I tell you guys this all the time, but before he's my quarterback, he's my friend. I'm going to support him through the ups and downs and always be by his side."

Some at this point have called for McCord to go ahead and depart for the NFL after just one season - more for the fans' sake than his - or for Ohio State to move on from McCord next season, whether that's

gentle nudging toward the transfer portal or an outright benching in favor of redshirt freshman Devin Brown, freshman Lincoln Kienholz or even Air Noland, who will arrive on campus in January.

While McCord was not sharp in every game this season, he finished the regular season with a more-than-respectable line by completing 65.8 percent of his passes for 3,170 yards, 24 touchdowns and six interceptions, with a passable bowl-game performance separating him from the fourth-most passing yards in a single season for Ohio State (Joe Germaine is fourth with 3,330 yards in 1998).

With another offseason under his belt as the undisputed starter, I believe McCord can take another step next season. Remember that the grass isn't always greener.