

Defense Diving Into “Pit Of Fire” For Motivation



Ohio State beat Maryland Saturday by a score of 37-17 in a game that was closer than the story the final score tells. The Buckeyes were only up by three points going into the third quarter, and while the offense ended up showing up late, they have their defense to thank for keeping this game within reach early on, and for keeping Maryland scoreless for the final 25 minutes. Ryan Day said he's fine with winning because of the defense.

"I have no preference as long as we win," he said. "I think the defense did some great things in this game. I thought Jim (Knowles) and the staff did a really good job with the game plan. I thought they were a step ahead in terms of the defenses we were in. He did a great job of getting them into the right calls."

Over the past few years, the defense has face a lot of criticism, giving up high-point totals while the Buckeyes were still pulling out wins in what is normally an offensive-minded Ohio State team under Day. Defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau said the defense hears the critics and it has been using that as motivation in their good start to the season.

"We all are hungry," he said. "We take in the things that we hear about our defense, especially from last year, and we add it to our pit of fire and continue to keep that chip on our shoulder and to grow."

Safety Sonny Styles said he believes the secondary group has something to prove after last year. He acknowledged that they didn't play to the level they would have liked, but people who don't believe in them motivate the team to prove they are a good defense.

Against what might have been the most high-powered offensive attack they have seen so far this year in Taulia Tagovailoa and the Terrapins, they showed that what they did in the first four games is real. Tagovailoa averaged 292.8 passing yards per game before Maryland came to Columbus, but only mustered 196 on Saturday. He had one touchdown and two interceptions, one that was taken back for a touchdown by safety Josh Proctor.

It was a question whether Ohio State would be able to contain the Tagovailoa, who can scramble and

use his legs whenever he needs to, but he only rushed for 21 yards in the game. They passed the test, and continue to every passing week with tougher ones coming.

“We have a motto. It’s cover, rush, work together,” Tuimoloau said. “That was a great display of what our back end is doing and what our front end is doing.”