

# Engels' Angle: CFP Title Run Cements Ryan Day's Place Among Program Greats



From the time he took over for Urban Meyer in 2019 up until last year, it seemed that there was always just something missing on Ryan Day's head coaching resume.

Sure, he had maintained Ohio State's position as a college football powerhouse in that span by leading it to an impressive 53-8 record and 38-3 conference mark with three College Football Playoff appearances, including one trip to the title game in 2020. He also turned the Buckeyes into a well-oiled NFL factory, with countless talented Buckeyes leaving the program only to start successful careers at the next level.

But even with these achievements, he still fell short of the lofty standards put on him by the Scarlet and Gray faithful. Aside from the Michigan losses — which are still a bugaboo on his resume — Day had been perceived heading into this year as the coach who could take care of business against inferior opponents but never get over the hump and win that “big game.”

And there was evidence to support it. Before this season, Day's biggest postseason win was the 2020 College Football Playoff semifinal victory over Clemson in the Sugar Bowl. Other than that, his team had fallen short in mostly every consequential game down the stretch, including two CFP semifinal heartbreakers against Clemson in 2019 and Georgia in 2022 and the three losses to Michigan.

All of these losses created a narrative that Day was not a “big-game” coach, and that thought was only heightened when the Buckeyes crumbled against 6-5 Michigan at the end of this season for their fourth straight defeat against their rivals.

But in the College Football Playoff, Day finally put those criticisms to bed, leading his team through four college football titans to secure his first national title as Buckeyes' head coach.

Day's title now puts him in rarified air in college football, as he is now one of just three active head

coaches to own a national title, the other two being Clemson's Dabo Swinney and Georgia's Kirby Smart.

But in my opinion, I think it is more important for Day to now be placed among the greats in Ohio State history, where he is now one of just five coaches in the history of the storied program to have a championship, joining legends Paul Brown, Woody Hayes, Jim Tressel and his predecessor Urban Meyer.

With all due respect to each of those legends listed, I don't think any of those coaches had a tougher path to win a title than the one Day faced. Heading into the College Football Playoff with many calling for his job, Day did the only thing he could really do to win back fans, that being going on that four-game run to bring a title back to Columbus.

While that is an incredibly tough challenge to take on and actually meet, what made it even more impressive was the way in which Day and the Buckeyes won each game. They ran through No. 9 seed Tennessee, top-ranked Oregon, No. 5 seed Texas and No. 7 seed Notre Dame by a combined score of 145-75. That's a heck of an achievement, and Day described it as such the day after the game.

"I think it can be argued that this was the best run in the history of college football," Day said at the champions news conference in Atlanta on Tuesday. "To go play at home against Tennessee who's a very, very good team, then go to Oregon, the No. 1 team in the country and win that game at the Rose Bowl the way we did and then beat Texas in Texas, which — that was a road game. I don't care what anybody says, that was a road game, a very difficult game, and then play a really good Notre Dame team like this. I think in the history of college football, I don't think there's been top five wins like that. All things that we're very proud of."

Although a lot of the credit for this championship run goes to the players who executed in the clutch, a lot of praise also needs to go to Day for the way he galvanized his team after the Michigan loss and kept them both motivated and prepared to make a historic title run.

Day could've easily given up on the season and bolted to another school or the NFL to get out of town. But instead, he put his head down and worked his way to his first-ever national title.

That's certainly the stuff of legends, and Day might already be one in Columbus after this postseason.