

Georgia Preparing For Ohio State Defense That “Does Their Jobs”



Even after surrendering 45 points to Michigan Nov. 26, there's little doubt Ohio State's defense is better than a year ago.

The Buckeyes' numbers are better across the board, as they allow fewer points, total yards, rushing yards and passing yards. Georgia, OSU's opponent for the College Football Playoff semifinal Dec. 31, had coaches and players give their thoughts on the renovated unit of defensive coordinator Jim Knowles Wednesday.

"They have really good players and they execute their system. They try to cause havoc," Georgia quarterback Stetson Bennett said. "They can come from a lot of different places. They do their assignment, and in order for us to be successful, we have to do ours."

As with anything in football, it starts up front. The Buckeyes have collected a respectable 32 sacks this season, tied for 32nd in the country, and rank 24th in the nation in terms of rush defense allowing 119.9 yards per game. Michigan and Wisconsin were the only two teams this season to average 4 yards per carry or better against them.

While Georgia center Sedrick Van Pran noted that individual players like defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau or linebacker Tommy Eichenberg have flashed at points throughout the season, he feels the strength of Ohio State's front seven is how it operates as a unit.

"The media gives a lot of guys attention, but one thing I see about this defensive front 7 is really that they all do their jobs collectively together," Van Pran said. "Nobody is a blinking light. Nobody is trying to be this big guy. Everybody is collectively working together, and that's huge. That's why they're so good and why what they're doing is working."

Georgia offensive coordinator Todd Monken sees pass rush ability across the board, focusing

specifically on the front four, and added that the variety of blitzes the team runs forces a team to stay disciplined on its offensive line.

“Well, they’re long and rangy. And I think the one thing they’re twitchy inside,” Monken said. “I know you’re talking about their outside guys. They create issues with their looks. So you have to be careful and not chase ghosts, but you have to be prepared because they’re not afraid to pressure you.”

The Buckeyes’ Eichenberg and defensive end Jack Sawyer were quoted Wednesday as saying they feel they have advantages across the board, and Monken, Van Pran and Bennett, were asked to respond to those quotes.

None of them took offense to what the players said, but rather took it as indicative of the type of heavyweight matchup presented Saturday.

“I mean, they should have confidence,” Monken said. “They have a good football team. I’m not going to sit here and say that we think in terms of X, Y and Z. We have advantages. We have a good football team. Our tape proves that. Their tape proves it. So at the end of the day, we got good football players. They’ve got good football players.

“At this point, it’s going to come down to execution. It’s going to come down to our preparation that leads up to this, and it’s not going to come down to whether we think we have advantages or we don’t think we have advantages because at the end of the day, both teams have good players.”

Be it execution or talent advantages, Georgia’s offense and Ohio State’s defense will get their shot to prove who is the better side in a mere three days’ time.