

Greg's Gauge: Ryan Day Remains The Man For The Job



The Buckeyes are back after a statement 42-17 win over Tennessee in the Horseshoe, Ohio State's first win over an SEC team since the 2014-15 season. Ryan Day and Chip Kelly's offense was back to showing off how explosive it can be with the talented playmakers it has all over the field.

But with that win, it's more obvious than ever that it's a mental block when it comes to Michigan. After a win like they had on Dec. 21, the fact that the stunning loss to the Wolverines is still being brought up is evidence of how bad the problem is. Ohio State is currently favored over No. 1 Oregon in the Rose Bowl, and still, most of the conversation is: where was this offense on Nov. 30?

Against two future NFL defensive tackles, the Buckeyes continually ran up the middle where the offensive line wasn't getting any push, either seemingly trying to prove a point or trying to set up the pass by establishing the run, which anyone could see wasn't working.

But against the Volunteers, the pass was used to set up the run game, which worked very well. Will Howard had one of his best games, if not *the* best, as a Buckeye, throwing for 311 yards and two touchdowns, both to Jeremiah Smith, who crossed 1,000 yards receiving in his true freshman season with now 12 touchdowns. Emeka Egbuka was very involved as well with five catches for 81 yards.

Whatever the offensive line did the past three weeks worked well, too. Luke Montgomery rotating at left guard with Austin Sierveld, who gave Tegra Tshabola breaks at right guard as well, helped the interior remain fresh and get the push that it needed in the run game and hold pass protections long enough for Howard to go through his progressions.

A former BSB writer joked with the current BSB staff in the press box at the Tennessee game that the dominant performance against the Vols proves that Day just needs therapy when it comes to playing the Wolverines, and maybe that is the case because this was a completely different coach and a completely different game plan than we saw in the final regular-season game.

But this also proves that Day still is the guy for the job. After the loss to Michigan, the calls for Day's job were louder than ever, but he proved that he still can bring out the best in an explosive offense like he did the first few years after he was hired with Justin Fields and C.J. Stroud under center. And there's nothing Day does better than recruiting players who will fit very well into a high-powered offense.

There's no excuse for this season's loss to their archrival, but Day is showing yet again that he is able to look back at the mistakes he made and fix them. Every year that passes, it's going to get mentally tougher to beat Michigan, but after those losses in the past, he has always been able to turn them around completely going into the postseason, other than when he had to play his third-string quarterback for the first time all season in the Cotton Bowl last year.

The performance on Dec. 21 quieted the calls for Day's job, for now, but a rematch against Oregon is going to have all eyes on it, and a win there could completely bring some Buckeye fans back onto Day's side. For others, it might take a national championship win, and for another select few OSU fans, they won't get behind the head coach again until he can get the monkey off his back of beating Michigan.

The team is obviously behind their head coach, and he did a phenomenal job rallying them from what might have been the worst loss in Ohio State history, and as previously mentioned, they are now favored over the Ducks in Pasadena on Jan. 1. The defense has fixed the issues that showed up during the Oregon loss on Oct. 12, and the offense is firing on all cylinders now with 10 days to prepare for the quarterfinals, and Ryan Day will have them ready for that game like he always does.

Former Alabama head coach Nick Saban said on "College GameDay" that he respects the way Day has gone about building his program and that fans need to get behind him, and I agree with the all-time great coach. Day can get this team to a national championship, and I still believe he can win one and even get over the Michigan hump if given another chance.