

Missouri Looking Forward To “Quality Opponent” In Ohio State For Cotton Bowl



Much of the focus leading up to the Cotton Bowl has been on Ohio State and who may or not play for the Buckeyes, but the team on the other side of the contest on Dec. 29 - that being Missouri and head coach Elijah Drinkwitz - are fully prepared for the task at hand, the coach said after his team arrived in Arlington, Texas, on Saturday.

“I know our team is appreciative of all the hospitality that’s going to be displayed this week,” he said. “But more importantly, we are excited about playing this game. Obviously a quality opponent in Ohio State and Coach (Ryan) Day. Know that they will be a tremendous challenge for us, and we look forward to preparing for that challenge throughout the week.”

Drinkwitz and his Tigers will go to battle with mostly a full roster, only expecting to be without cornerback Ennis Rakestraw Jr. and linebackers Ty’Ron Hopper and Chad Bailey due to injury, while none are expected to opt out.

That is not the case for the Buckeyes, who still await word from several draft-eligible players on their status for the game - including star wideout Marvin Harrison Jr. - but that is not something Drinkwitz is concerned about.

“That hasn’t been any part of our conversation or concern,” he said. “We are focused about our team and our opportunity here. ... But that’s part of it. We didn’t have any opt-outs. Our brotherhood is wanting to play this one final game, this one opportunity together, and we’re excited to do that. Again, we’re not really focused on the opponent. We’re focused on our team and what our mission and goal is this year.”

And while the stakes may be high for Missouri given the Tigers are seeking their first bowl win since 2014 - not to mention a significant win over Ohio State - Drinkwitz said his upstart team is only focused on going 1-0 in the Cotton Bowl and is looking to avoid the outside noise.

“Every game that we play in is big,” he said. “That’s the 1-0 mindset. That’s the 1-0 mentality. We’re not really trying to frame any other way than that. It’s a great opportunity for us to play on ESPN and a

national audience. But for us, in order to be 1-0, there's a lot of things that have to take place, starting with our fundamentals this week, our practice habits, the way we conduct ourselves. ... That's really what our focus is. I don't think our team's trying to make it bigger than that."