

Moone's Landing: Trends Remain Intact In Fourth-Straight Loss to U-M



Two presidential elections.

A global pandemic.

1,829 days.

That's everything in between the last time Ohio State beat Michigan.

Just over five years since the Buckeyes took down the Wolverines on the football field.

1,829 days.

So much goes into preparing for Michigan at Ohio State and within the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. Drills named after the Wolverines, covering the scout team's helmet with tape to resemble the winged look of the Michigan helmets, and a countdown within the facility that restarts every year, ticking down neon red numbers until the next time the Buckeyes tilt off in "The Game."

But for the last four seasons, that countdown has merely been a ticking clock towards another loss for Ohio State; four seasons of broken promises, four seasons of let downs, four seasons of simply not getting it done.

It's hard to nail down exactly what has gone wrong. Ryan Day and Co. won in 2019, a 56-27 decision made up mostly of guys that still resembled the Urban Meyer spirit and mindset. After a 2020 cancellation of The Game, 2021 marked the first time in a decade Michigan won and it's been that way since.

Maybe it's the lack of defensive impact in the running game. In 2021, former linebacker turned running back Hassan Haskins ran rampant on the Buckeyes, toting the ball for 169 yards and five touchdowns

with flashbacks of Tim Biakabutuka in 1995. A year later, Donovan Edwards ripped off two fourth quarter touchdowns, going for 75 and 85 yards, respectively. In the 2023 edition, Blake Corum had a 22-yard touchdown scamper that broke a 17-17 tie in the third quarter that gave Michigan a lead it would never relinquish.

This year, it was another former linebacker turned ball carrier, as Kael Mulling ran for 27 big ones on a third-and-6 that put Michigan in field goal range and allowed for Dominic Zvada to nail a 21-yard chip shot to win the game with just 45 seconds left.

Or could it be the lack of pressure on the quarterback in the passing game? 2021: zero sacks. 2022: one sack. 2023: one sack.

2024? Zero sacks.

Four games, four seasons, two sacks for Ohio State in the biggest rivalry in college football.

1,829 days.

There's a myriad of things that went wrong for the Buckeyes in the game. Will Howard, who was an extremely efficient and well-rounded quarterback, threw two interceptions and gifted Michigan a touchdown after pick No. 1 was returned to the Ohio State 2-yard line and allowed for Mullings to punch it in two plays later.

There were also the two missed field goals from Jayden Fielding, which if they were made, would have given the Buckeyes a 16-10 lead and forced the Wolverines to punch the ball into the endzone instead of settling for Zvada's boot.

77 total rushing yards for Ohio State, including a 10 attempt, 21-yard day from TreVeyon Henderson - a mark that was well short of Michigan's 172 yards on the ground, marking the 23rd consecutive season that the team with more rushing yards won the rivalry game.

Lots of things went wrong, but the worst issue was the numbers on the scoreboard, giving Michigan its fourth-straight win over Ohio State in a series that has been largely dominated by the Buckeyes in the 21st century.

It's another heartbreaking loss for Ohio State, a program that is now perennially stuck in head-scratching mode against its biggest rival. A talented group of seniors who came back to win against Michigan, guys like Jack Sawyer, Emeka Egbuka and Henderson, will now leave Columbus with no gold pants to boast about from their college days.

Where does Ohio State go from here?

There's still likely a playoff spot on the horizon for the Buckeyes, so a chance for a national championship is certainly not out of the question, but it'll take a lot to get there. Massive glaring issues that stung Ohio State - such as the lack of a running game - the most in the biggest game of the season will absolutely need to be cleaned up, and it won't be an easy task after the Buckeyes lost starting left tackle Josh Simmons and starting center Seth McLaughlin throughout the season.

In terms of playoff matchups, it's still far too early to tell where Ohio State will end up playing or who it will be against, but after four-straight losses to an archrival, it is the most severe national championship

or bust time for the Buckeyes in years.

1,829 days.