

My Thoughts: Ohio State Couldn't Put Pieces Together To Finish Miracle Season



To start this off, I want to be clear: I did not expect Ohio State to make the national championship after watching the first six games this team played. The talent was there, sure, but the Buckeyes were streaky and inconsistent, much of which was likely not helped by the sheer lack of games this team played together.

But against Clemson, I saw the team I expected to see from day one, a motivated group that could truly beat anybody, even with a secondary that still had a lot of work to do. That led to me expecting a back-and-forth offensive showdown with Alabama, the real juggernaut of the sport.

That did not happen, and both sides of the ball are to blame for that.

Yes, the clear area to pick on is the defense and, specifically, the secondary, which was absolutely shredded by quarterback Mac Jones and wide receiver DeVonta Smith, who was breaking records before it even hit halftime. The pass defense deserves criticism, specifically Shaun Wade, who called his shot on covering Smith and then was blown out of the water by him nearly every single time the pair matched up.

Still, I expected Alabama to do that to Ohio State's pass defense, which has been bad all year. I did not expect, however, for the Buckeyes' offense to stall out as much as it did.

Some of this, maybe even a lot of this, can be attributed to the injury to Trey Sermon on the first play from scrimmage, but this team still had Justin Fields, and it did not use him enough. His numbers weren't great - 17 of 33 for 194 yards and a touchdown, as well as six carries for a team-high 67 yards - but he should have had more opportunities to go out and win this game.

Taking the ball out of your star quarterback's hands on a fourth down in the third quarter, when that running back isn't Sermon, is a terrible decision and was the play that I think officially killed Ohio State's chances.

But, even with what was a very disappointing end to an Ohio State's season in Miami, there's still plenty to be happy about if you're an Ohio State fan. First of all, the Buckeyes made it to the national title game, something only one other team did this year. Second, they beat Clemson for the first time in program history.

Third, and maybe most importantly, Ohio State played football this season, something that could be argued should never have happened, but did anyway, and because of that, we all got to watch Justin Fields play football at the collegiate level for what is likely the last time.

In August, I, and assumedly many others, would have taken that, and making a run all the way to the finals would have just been a bonus for fans of this team.

How will this year be remembered? It's hard to say, but the fact that the Buckeyes had a shot at a title after everything else that happened this year should be worth something.

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