

Notre Dame Changing Game Plan After Last Year's Loss To Buckeyes



In the matchup against Notre Dame in last season's opener, Ohio State was held to only 21 points, tied their lowest mark of the year with a very windy game at Northwestern. Part of that could have been getting on the field for the first time for the 2022, but a big part of it was because the Fighting Irish have a strong defense.

Last year they gave up only 329.3 yards per game to their opponents, and they are off to an even better start in their first four games of the new season. The four teams they have beat have averaged only 234.3 yards per game.

Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman said last year against the Buckeyes, part of his game plan was to try to hold onto the ball as long as they could so they could limit the offensive plays they were able to get.

"Part of the mindset going into that game was trying to control the ball as long as we could," he said "Limit their offensive possessions. It's still got to be complementary football as we go into this Saturday, but I don't want to play not to lose. I don't want to play that way. I want our guys to be aggressive and our guys to be attacking. And so we will play complementary football, but our objective isn't just to hold the ball and huddle every single play, kind of what my mindset probably was last year."

Sam Hartman gives them that ability this year, but it seems like there may be more confidence in the Fighting Irish's ability to stop what looked like a very high-powered offense last week against Western Kentucky. They will have multiple players they were without in last year's game, like linebacker Marist Liufau, and freshman All-American Benjamin Morrison.

The rest of the defense also has one more year of experience, and any returning players will know what to expect from Ohio State's offense. Kyle McCord believes the Notre Dame cornerbacks are the best they've seen all year.

"You can tell they're playing with confidence," he said. "They're playing fast in that system, and they do a good job. They're two really talented guys, the secondaries really good. So, I think it's going to be our best test yet."

Freeman said the biggest goal for the Notre Dame defense is going to be limiting big plays, which the Buckeyes have had a lot of in the past few weeks. He did say they still want to win time of possession, but they want to force Ohio State to make long drives down the field if they are going to score.

Marvin Harrison Jr., who has scored in his fair share of long, explosive plays for the Buckeyes said he isn't too worried about being matched up against the best players in Notre Dame's secondary since it's ultimately a team game. He has confidence that he will be able to win some matchups and that the big stage won't be too much for McCord.

Even with the new clock rule Ryan Day has lamented so much this season, it seems like this could be a higher scoring matchup this year with both teams wanting to be fast-paced and get their offenses going early.