

Ohio State Arrives At Cotton Bowl, Preparing For One More Chance To Compete This Season



It is not the finish that Ohio State envisioned this season, but for the Buckeyes - who will matchup with Missouri in the Cotton Bowl on Dec. 29 - it is the finish that has been put in front of them, and they're preparing as best as they can to come away with a win in their final game of the season.

"We're preparing to play the best football in America," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said on Saturday after the Buckeyes arrived in Arlington, Texas. "That's what we're going to do. We know it's going to be a challenge. We'd expect nothing less coming to the Cotton Bowl."

"We're going to continue to prepare for this game the way we've prepared for other games in the past and use the same model that we've used for bowl games in the past in terms of preparing," he continued. "Our guys got a little bit of a break. We will get back at it tomorrow (Sunday), get on the practice field, have a great week of practice over at the stadium, and then go follow our plan to win."

The Buckeyes will be without a key starter in safety Lathan Ransom, who Day said on Saturday would be out for the game, and they also await the status of wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr., who made the trip for the Cotton Bowl but could opt out. Missouri will also be without some key players, including cornerback Ennis Rakestraw Jr. and linebackers Ty'Ron Hopper and Chad Bailey.

The emphasis on this game is not that of a College Football Playoff semifinal, the importance is not lost on the players, including sixth-year wide receiver Xavier Johnson, and the drive to win is certainly evident throughout the roster. He added that he hopes this game is able to create a positive sendoff for himself and the other Buckeyes who will be playing in their last game for the Scarlet and Gray.

"As a team, just to have the opportunity to go out there one more time with our brothers, go out there one more time and compete," he said. "And like Coach Day said, against an excellent opponent, so at the highest level. I think it allows us to really earn something for the season. We put a lot of work into this season. People were sacrificing so much, sacrificing time, sacrificing seeing certain people."

"It's important - imperative - that we come out of this season with something, so I think that that is the main thing. We're coming down here to win a game. We're coming down here to enjoy ourselves and have a celebration of the 2023 Buckeyes."