

Ohio State Complimentary Of Texas' "Well-Rounded" Offense Ahead Of CFP Semifinal Matchup



In its College Football Playoff quarterfinal matchup against Arizona State, one of the biggest reasons behind Texas' near-blown lead was its inability to get much going in the run game. After totaling an impressive 292 yards on the ground against Clemson in the first round, the Longhorns mustered just 53 yards on 30 carries, a major struggle that almost led to a historic second-half postseason collapse.

Although Texas has encountered its fair share of struggles on offense in the College Football Playoff — especially when putting them side-by-side with the Buckeyes' triumphs on that side of the ball against Tennessee and Oregon — those on the Ohio State defense say that the Longhorns are a lot to handle on the offensive side of the ball and boast an extremely explosive unit that they should be fully prepared to face.

"You said they struggle in the run game, I think they have a super explosive run game," Styles said Sunday morning when asked about the Longhorns' rushing struggles against Arizona State. "If you watch the Clemson game, they put up almost 250 rushing yards or something like that. I think they are a team that is capable of putting up around 50 points if you let them.

"So, I mean, the defense is going to need to show up ready to play. They're an extremely talented offense on all three levels. Their quarterback is a great player. Running backs are very, very explosive. Receivers are very explosive. They have a great tight end, great o-line, so they're a well rounded offense."

According to Styles and his teammates, Texas' offense, which ranks 21st nationally in scoring offense at 34.3 points per game and 63rd in rushing offense at 165.5 yards per contest, is perhaps most dangerous when it plays off the run. Styles and Ohio State consensus All-American safety Caleb Downs both said that quarterback Quinn Ewers and his offense does a great job of keeping opposing defenses guessing in the play-action pass, where its effective run game can help set up the pass, giving way to downfield shots along the perimeter.

The Longhorns enter the contest ranked tied for seventh in the nation in explosive plays that go over 40 yards, while it has also had 10 plays go over 50 yards.

“Early on in the game (Ewers) gets in his routine, (makes) some of those routine throws, they run the ball, and then it’s a play-action shot 50 yards down the field,” Styles said. “I think he does a super good job with that, being able to sell the play action, pull the safeties up and get you downfield for a 60-yard bomb or something like that. That’s the biggest thing that stands out to me on film.”

“They do a really good job with eye candy,” Downs said. “And it creates a lot of challenges for the defense to see if it’s a run or pass — because that’s when they’re going to take their shots too. So (we need to) have great eye discipline, seeing their line and seeing what they are telling us.”

Downs, unlike his other Buckeye teammates, has experience playing against the talented Ewers and the Longhorns’ offense while at Alabama. He started for the Tide during their 34-24 loss to Texas at home in which the Longhorns totaled 454 total yards of offense and had two explosive touchdown passes that went for 44 and 39 yards.

Downs did not go into the specifics regarding what went wrong against the Longhorns while he was with the Crimson Tide, but he did say that Texas coach Steve Sarkisian and the Longhorns’ talented pass offense — which now includes his former Alabama teammate Isiah Bond (13 catches, 532 yards, five touchdowns) will put together a creative game-plan that they will need to be ready for come Friday night in Arlington, Texas.

“(Texas offensive coordinator Kyle Flood) really does a good job of providing a lot of eye-candy for the defense, and all the shifts and motions, you have to make sure that you’re on the same page in order to play a really sound and complete game,” Downs said. “They’ve done a great job this year and that’s let them get to this point.”