

# Ohio State Head Coach Ryan Day Avoiding Distractions Ahead Of National Title Game



Dating all the way back to last summer, Ohio State has — for the most part — been viewed as one of the top contenders for the national title this season, with some, like former Buckeyes’ coaches Urban Meyer and Jim Tressel even going as far as to say that this year’s Scarlet and Gray squad is one of the more talented in recent memory.

Although there have certainly been some major bumps and bruises along the way, the Buckeyes have largely matched those lofty expectations this season, as they currently find themselves on the doorstep of their first national title since 2014, fighting with Notre Dame for the top spot in all of college football Monday night in Atlanta.

Ohio State — which has emerged in the past few weeks as an even heavier favorite to win it all, especially after stomping Tennessee and Oregon in the first two rounds of the College Football Playoff — has faced an abundance of pressure all year to get the job done and complete this “natty or bust” season.

Although some young teams may let this heavy pressure and expectations get to their heads, this veteran Buckeye squad is making sure that they continue to avoid those types of distractions and put all their focus on preparing for a physical and well-coached Notre Dame squad, according to head coach Ryan Day.

“To think too much about that right now is kind of over here, and I’m with you,” Day said Wednesday at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center when asked to reflect on the pressure his team faces as national title favorites. “I think when you start to get into that, though, as a coach or as a player, it can be a distraction. And one of the things that we’re trying to do this week is eliminate all distractions.

“What’s happened in the past doesn’t matter. What’s happening moving forward doesn’t matter. All that matters is this game right now, and then we can kind of figure out what that is.”

Day continued to say that his team can avoid all of these distractions this week by simply going to work each day and making sure that each person in the program is doing their job to the best of their abilities. He said these next few days will be key in preparing and practicing for the Irish, while the final few days leading up the kickoff will be centered around getting physically, mentally and spiritually

ready for the game.

“I think pressure — whatever you call it — the way that you just continue to work during those moments is to focus on right now, just focus on your job and focus on what’s in front of you,” he said. “Because the rest of it doesn’t matter. And that’s kind of what I’m going to focus on right now. I do think that there’s great conversation to be had about that down the road and what comes with it, because (Ohio State) isn’t the same as a lot of other places. It’s just different. But, I’m proud of our guys and the way that we stuck together throughout the year and — so again, now we’re just going to have a great day of practice. That’s it. No distractions.”

As for what that preparation entails, Day said that he and his staff will work to ensure that the Buckeyes will play their best game of the season come Monday night, where they take care of the football, play efficiently in all three phases and win the physical battle up front, among other things.

Each will need to be achieved on Monday if Ohio State is to get past Marcus Freeman’s tough Notre Dame squad and hoist the championship trophy, according to Day.

“(Notre Dame is) resilient, tough, well coached, so that forces us to make sure we’re playing very, very efficiently across the board,” Day said. “We have to play a clean game. We can’t beat ourselves. We have to make sure that we’re the best version of ourselves in this game. That’s it. And (we need to) be really, really aggressive and make sure that we’re running the ball on defense, we’re tackling really, really well, getting off the field on third down, running the football and being physical and controlling the game. And when it’s time to make plays downfield, we need to make them.

“Special teams will be a challenge. They do a great job. They’re creative in what they do. You’ve seen them run fakes and different things, so we have to be on high alert for different things there, trying to steal a possession. So they challenge you in a lot of different ways, and they’re a very good team.”