

Ohio State Not Overlooking Minnesota With Michigan Game Looming



Ohio State is inching closer and closer towards its titanic matchup against arch-rival Michigan on Nov. 25, a matchup that has mammoth postseason implications attached to it and is likely slated to be one of the more highly-anticipated and intense games in The Game's 126-year history.

Before that, however, the Buckeyes must take care of business at home on Saturday against 5-5 Minnesota, who is coming off a disappointing 49-30 loss to Purdue last weekend. Despite the looming top-five clash with Michigan and an obviously-inferior Minnesota team coming into Ohio Stadium, head coach Ryan Day is not taking the clash against the Gophers lightly,

"They lost a couple guys for a couple weeks and they're probably going to get a lot of guys back," Day said on his daily radio spot with 97.1 on Thursday. "So we know it's a good team that's coming in here that we have to play well against."

While the Gophers may be limping into this matchup having lost their last two games to Purdue and Illinois, Day said he knows Minnesota head coach P.J. Fleck will have his team ready to step into Ohio Stadium and compete with his team. Day lauded the hard-nosed culture that Fleck has instilled since arriving in 2017, a mentality that allows his team to play with a kind of toughness that the Buckeyes must be ready for.

"I think P.J. does a great job, and has every time he's been a head coach," Day said. "They play hard, they do. When you look at their team, year-in-and-year out, they buy in to the culture. And I think it all starts with P.J. and the way that he coaches. I think they're tough. They want to run the football, they want to take care of the football. The defensive scheme that they've used, they know very, very well and they've seen a lot of people come at them with different schemes."

Day said Minnesota's rushing attack, which enters Saturday ranked fifth in the Big Ten in yards per game with 160.4, is a particular strength of the team that is worth noting because it often has allowed them to control the pace of the game.

But he also extended some significant praise to the Gophers' defensive side of the ball, most notably safety Tyler Nubin, who has recorded a team-high four interceptions along with 49 tackles, four pass

breakups, a forced fumble and a fumble recovery. He added that Nubin and the entire Gophers defense can pose some challenges with their aggressiveness in the run game, which he views as a total team effort, from the defensive line to the secondary.

“He’s a good player,” Day said. “As good of a safety that we’ll see this year. I think he makes a lot of plays. He’s active in the run game as well. I think they play hard, and they’re well coached. Like always, when you play against Minnesota, they have a tough physical front, they’re going to stop the run and have a bunch of guys run around with the ball. And they have guys who will compete for the ball on the back end.”

With all of these strengths in mind, Day said that he feels his team is as prepared as ever to ignore the noise of the Michigan matchup and emerge victorious against Fleck’s Gophers on Saturday. This, according to the Coach, is a product of the leadership and hard-working mentality present in the locker room, which has been even more palpable in November.

“I think this team likes football,” Day said. “They come into the building every day. And it’s not drudgery. I’ve been around teams like that where you have to push them, prod them. I come in in the morning, and there are guys in the building. There are guys watching film on their own, there are guys catching JUGS, there are guys in the weight room. It’s a good sign when you’re in November and guys love football like this and want to prepare at a high level.”