

# Ohio State, Notre Dame Preparing For National Championship Like Any Other Game



The national championship game on Monday between Ohio State and Notre Dame provides both teams with their best chance at a national championship in at least a decade, but both sides are sticking to their respective routines.

“I’ve talked to a couple of people that I keep in contact that have played in championship games or the final game, that have been in a position in some type of sport and to a tee, most of them say the same thing, which is that you have to continue to approach the game the way you’ve done all year,” Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman said at Hartsfield-Jackson Airport in Atlanta after his team landed on Friday. “Everybody understands the magnitude of the game, but the approach and the preparation shouldn’t change and that’s what we’ve been focusing on.”

Head coach Ryan Day wants his Buckeyes to maintain the work ethic that helped them win three straight playoff games to make their first national championship game since 2020, while also keeping in mind how they’ve gotten to this point.

“A little bit of both,” Day said on Friday night in a brief availability at Hartsfield-Jackson Airport when asked if he wants his team to lean into the fact that they’re in the national championship or treat Monday’s game like any other. “I talked to the guys after we had our walkthrough today in practice that when we get on the plane you fly to Atlanta and get to the hotel, it’s a good time to reflect on the journey you’ve been on personally, it’s everyone’s dream to play in the national championship, but also what the team has been on in terms of their journey to get to right here, because our first team meeting was today a year ago, and here we are a year later in the national championship. With that being said when we wake up in the morning it’s all about work.”

If it’s possible, the national championship game may take on an even greater meaning for Freeman, an Ohio State linebacker from 2004-08. During the brief availability though, Freeman downplayed the effect of taking on his former team.

“All we’ve been talking about is this opportunity is about this opportunity,” Freeman said. “It’s not about where I played college ball, it’s not about the previous games you’ve played against Ohio State, it’s about the opportunity to play in the national championship versus a dang good football team in Ohio State.”

Freeman’s respect for the current iteration of the Buckeyes was only reciprocated by Day for Notre Dame. Three days before the game, Day hopes his team can play their best in the last game of the season.

“We know we have a great challenge ahead of us,” Day said. “Notre Dame is a very, very good team and very disciplined, a lot of good players, very well-coached, certainly complementary in all three phases, put pressure on you. We know we have to be at our best, and that’s the goal in this game is to play our best game of the season. I still don’t think we’ve done that, and that’s the goal.”