

# Ohio State's Running Backs Seek To Put Country On Notice Against Notre Dame



Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman and Ohio State skipper Ryan Day both placed considerable attention on stopping the run during their weekly press conferences ahead of Saturday's marquee matchup between the No. 2 Buckeyes and No. 5 Fighting Irish.

While Freeman declared that the key to slowing down the Buckeyes' high-powered offense is to limit Ohio State's running game, the tailback trio of TreVeyon Henderson, Miyan Williams and Dallan Hayden look to make that task difficult for the Fighting Irish.

"We're definitely going to let the country know who we are," Henderson said on Wednesday. "We know we have a big opponent coming up, but we've been working to prepare for them all year. We know what we have coming."

For Henderson, Saturday's clash is his first opportunity to reaffirm himself as one of the nation's top running backs after a breakout freshman season. In his first season in the program, Henderson racked up 1,248 rushing yards and 19 total touchdowns — an Ohio State freshman record.

As Henderson enters his second season as a Buckeye, he noted that he feels more in tune with the grind of a college football season.

"I feel like I got better at everything," Henderson said. "I can still improve, there's still room for improvement. But I feel like I got better at everything I wanted to get better at."

While Henderson will be the lead man in the unit, he will be followed by talented depth pieces — including power-back Williams and first-year Hayden. The Buckeyes lost the services of second-year back Evan Pryor during fall camp after he sustained a knee injury. Henderson emphasized the Buckeyes will play with Pryor in mind throughout the 2022 campaign.

“This season is dedicated to him,” Henderson said. “The running back room, everything we do, is dedicated to him.”

Williams steps into his third season with the Buckeyes after a rollercoaster campaign in 2021. The Cincinnati native started Ohio State’s first two games of the season, before falling behind Henderson on the depth chart after missing the Buckeyes’ third game against Tulsa — in which Henderson cemented his status as the No. 1 option out of the backfield.

Although Williams saw his role diminish over time, he still carved out a solid season as a depth piece at running back. He produced a Big Ten-best 7.2 yards per attempt while toting the rock 71 times for 508 yards and three scores in 2021.

For Hayden, Saturday’s contest will give him his first taste of action at the college level. As a junior and senior in high school, Hayden proved he belonged at this level — rushing for more than 2,000 yards each season while accounting for 57 total touchdowns in his final two years at Christian Brothers in Memphis.

Hayden arrived in Columbus during the summer and had to quickly get acclimated to offseason works and fall camp. As the injury to Pryor has vaulted Hayden into a larger role, Henderson said the first-year back has grown in his short time at Ohio State.

“He’s grown a lot,” Henderson said. “He’s getting coached by one of the best running backs coaches in the country. That’s a huge help, but he already came in like he was ready.”