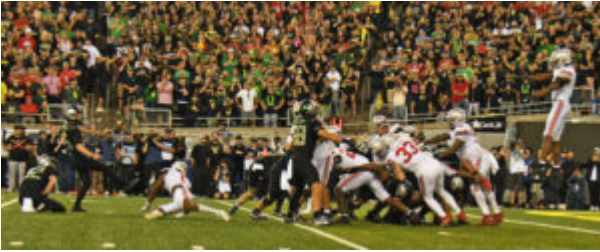


OSU, Oregon Using Regular Season Matchup To Prepare For Rose Bowl



By the time Ohio State and Oregon square off in the Rose Bowl for the Quarterfinals of the College Football Playoff, the Ducks' dramatic 32-31 win over the Buckeyes on Oct. 12 will probably feel like a distant memory for players and coaches.

The mid-season matchup had seven lead changes and was concluded by a 12-yard run from graduate quarterback Will Howard, who hit the ground right as time ran off the clock.

Plenty of games have been played by both teams since Howard's slightly late slide, but the Buckeyes will want to keep in mind what they saw from the Ducks during the week seven matchup, according to Day.

"It's not like we played them just a couple weeks ago. This was midseason, and there's been a lot of football played since then," Day said during a joint Rose Bowl press conference with Oregon head coach Dan Lanning on Wednesday. "Like I said, I feel like we've evolved, they've evolved, different teams. So there are certainly things that you want to look at that happened in that game but also, as time's moved on, how they've changed, how we've changed and how does that fit as we put together the game plan.

But ultimately, we want to make sure that we're putting together a great game plan so our guys can play fast, they understand what we're trying to get done in terms of attacking in all three phases, and they can play with emotion and physicality."

The Buckeyes' biggest area of concern in their narrow loss to the Ducks was their passing defense. Big Ten Most Valuable Player Dillon Gabriel threw for 341 yards and two touchdowns while completing 23-of-34 passes.

Ohio State's defense hasn't allowed a 300-yard game from an opposing offense since that Oregon game, and according to Day, they've improved every week since allowing almost 500 yards to the Ducks.

"Our defense is playing with great confidence right now," Day said. "You could feel that on the field on Saturday. And they've continued that build after the game that we played with these guys the last time, you can see every week has gotten stronger and stronger. We have to go do it, we have to go put it on the field, but I know we have a great challenge ahead, but our guys are ready for it."

Despite coming out on top in the game, the regular season matchup will also be a part of the Ducks' preparation according to Lanning.

"Well, you got the time to do it, so you look at all of it," Lanning said. "You look at the history of the

team, you look at the history of the coordinators, this kind of is unique, where it gives you a little bit more time to evaluate big picture just coordinator philosophies, and then also the original matchup, what that looks like, and then what they've done since. So I don't think you'd necessarily focus on one of those things. I think you focus on all that."

As much as the coaches can use the first game to prepare for the pivotal playoff matchup, the priority is creating a game plan that the players on the field can be confident in, according to Day.

"At the end of the day, you only have to pack what you need and you have to make sure that it's clean and it's a plan that the guys can go execute with a lot of confidence," Day said. "That's what we're in the middle of right now."