

OSU Plans For Similar Offensive Line Rotation In The Rose Bowl



After a couple of weeks of instability with their offensive line, the Buckeyes might have found the right formula.

During a 42-17 win over Tennessee, Ohio State gave a pretty even split of snaps to guards Luke Montgomery, Austin Siereveld and Tegra Tshabola. Head coach Ryan Day said in a joint Rose Bowl press conference with Oregon head coach Dan Lanning on Monday, that the plan for Ohio State's game against Oregon was to continue to rotate at the guard positions.

"Right now, as we come out of this game, I would say that that's going to continue the way that we did that, but we'll assess it as the week goes on and see what gives us the best chance to win a game," Day said on Monday.

Considering how efficient the Buckeyes' offense was in the 25-point win, it's no real surprise the current plan from Day and the rest of the coaching staff is to stick with what they did against Tennessee.

Ohio State tallied 473 yards, including 156 on the ground. Graduate quarterback Will Howard threw for 311 yards while completing 24-of-29 passes, and despite going up against the fearsome Tennessee front seven, the Buckeyes' offensive line allowed no sacks.

It was a much-improved effort from the offensive line than its performance in a 13-10 loss to Michigan.

The Wolverines' defense didn't have a sack in the game, but they recorded four tackles for loss and allowed only 77 rushing yards on 26 carries.

Needing a change to the offensive line after the poor showing, the Buckeyes started the same group of offensive linemen but rotated their guards much more than they did against Michigan. On Monday, Day felt the trio of guards stepped up.

"I thought that they all played well," Day said. "I felt like Justin working the rotation in the way he did, allowed them to play fast, and then get a little bit of relief getting off the field. And I think Luke ended up with maybe 30, 31 plays. Of those 30 and 31 plays, I thought he did a nice job. Every play wasn't perfect, but there were some really good plays in there, great effort. And I could feel his presence out there, which is a big part of the offensive line. Austin played very, very well. Tegra had some really good plays, so I think they all worked together there."

The Buckeyes' offensive line was first thrown into disarray during their regular season meeting with Oregon, a 32-31 loss on Oct. 12, when starting left tackle Josh Simmons suffered a season-ending injury.

Ohio State replaced Simmons with redshirt junior tackle Zen Michalski, but he was also hurt during his first start against Nebraska. The Buckeyes found some success moving guard Donovan Jackson out to left tackle, but before the Indiana game, starting center Seth McLaughlin suffered a season-ending torn achilles injury.

McLaughlin's injury thrust 2023-starting center Carson Hinzman back into the starting center position. The Buckeyes' offensive line then had major issues against Michigan, which preceded the adjustments made for the Tennessee game. Heading into the Rose Bowl, the offensive line appears to be back on the right track.

Day described the first Oregon game as a reference point for Tshabola and Siereveld who both played in that game. One major change between that game and the Rose Bowl though, is the availability of Oregon All-Big Ten defensive end Jordan Burch. Burch was out with an injury for the regular season matchup but as it stands less than a week before the Rose Bowl, he will be in the lineup and a large part of the Duck's talented pass rush, which should provide a tremendous challenge to the Buckeyes' offensive line.

"They'll need to play well," Day said about his interior offensive linemen. "We know they have very good players inside and up front, so they have to keep building on it."