

Predictions: No. 2 Ohio State Ends Three-Game Losing Streak To Michigan In Convincing Fashion



After a years' worth of talk and predictions, No. 2 Ohio State has finally made it to The Game, where it will face off against 6-5 Michigan at Ohio Stadium on Saturday afternoon for a chance to break its three-game losing streak and bring the rivalry back in their favor.

With the two teams set to battle it out in just under 24 hours Saturday afternoon (Noon, FOX), BSB offered their predictions on what to expect inside Ohio Stadium, where millions of people around the country will be tuned into one of the more historic rivalries in sports.

Patrick Engels: Buckeyes Tested Early But Pull Away For Blowout Win

I'm not sure if you can even quantify the pressure that will be on the Buckeyes come Saturday afternoon at Ohio Stadium. Everything Ohio State did during the offseason — the transfer additions, the player retention, the desperate last-second attempts to keep top freshmen prospects — was made to put themselves in better position to win The Game, and if they cannot come out on top four a fourth year in a row, chaos will likely ensue in Columbus and all throughout Ohio.

That pressure is real — especially for the 22-to-23-year-old seniors who decided to come back for a final season to beat Michigan — and it makes it difficult for the players and staff members to focus on the task ahead of them rather than what this game means from a broader perspective.

Because of all of these outside factors, I could see the Buckeyes coming out a bit tight to start. With millions of people watching across the state and country to see if they can finally avenge the loss and put away the hated Wolverines, Ohio State may start out a little slow, which has been a bugaboo for this team all season.

The exhilaration that comes with playing in this rivalry can sometimes bring out the best in players, and because of that I don't see the Wolverines — who are already coming in confident with three-straight wins — backing down early. I wouldn't be surprised if we see Michigan and quarterback Davis Warren put together an early scoring drive to put the pressure back on the Buckeyes, and then the Buckeyes' offense conversely looking a little shaky at first, allowing Michigan's elite defensive front to generate some pressure and stuff rushing gaps early on in the contest against a patchwork OSU offensive line.

Because of this, I think the Wolverines will be in this game at halftime, trailing by about a field goal or so — I'll say 10-6 — which will cause Buckeye fans to be on edge throughout the entire length of the intermission.

But as we have seen all year, Day, Chip Kelly and Jim Knowles are masters at making second-half adjustments, and with reputations on the line and pressure mounting, I think they will have them ready to roll out of the locker room.

I'm expecting a Buckeye blitz similar to what we saw against Indiana in the second half, where Will Howard and the passing offense start to throw it down the field more, the running game starts to wake up and the defense is as dominant as it has been in recent second halves this month.

With all this considered, I see Ohio State erupting for two or three early touchdowns in the third quarter, each of which are generated by some more balanced play and some shots down the field. I'll predict Howard to find Emeka Egbuka and Jeremiah Smith on huge gains during these drives, and TreVeyon Henderson punching it in on one of those drives, with Howard finding one of his receivers on the other.

Don't be surprised if we see another important special teams play during this sequence, either another Caleb Downs strong return or some trickery from Day and Co. The Buckeyes have tried to run fake punts before against the Wolverines, and I think they might pull it off again.

From there, I think all the pressure will be off the Buckeyes, and it will be smooth sailing the rest of the way. I'm predicting Ohio State to continue to pour it on as the minutes go by — taking out all of their frustration from past years with every score and big play — and eventually go up by 25 or more points, nearly shutting out the Wolverines in the second half to cruise to the comfortable win.

Michigan has had Ohio State's number for three years straight, but this time around, it will be Ryan Day and the Buckeyes who finally break through. **Ohio State 31, Michigan 9**

Bobby Gorbett: Ohio State Crushes Michigan

On Saturday, Ohio State has home-field advantage, much more to play for, a longer-tenured coaching staff, and most importantly a much more talented roster than its arch-rival Michigan. Still, there are no certainties in college football, and that truth feels only amplified under the pressure and intensity of The Game.

Despite being 20-point favorites against Michigan on Saturday, the Buckeyes treated their last regular season game like the Super Bowl in media availabilities throughout the week, and for good reason. The Buckeyes have fallen short in their previous three matchups against the Wolverines and since the last loss, many fans and those in the media have been reluctant to acknowledge the Buckeyes' accomplishments, until they avenge those losses.

I think that's exactly what Ohio State will do on Saturday. I see the Buckeyes having one of their best performances of the season against a lesser opponent on the way to a dominant victory.

The Michigan defense will match up relatively well with Ohio State's offense considering the talent they have on their front seven, but few defenses have slowed down the Will Howard, Jeremiah Smith-led unit. With All-American cornerback Will Johnson seeming doubtful to play on Saturday, I expect the

Wolverines to have serious issues slowing down the Buckeyes' passing attack.

Unlike in previous years, the Michigan offensive line is not one of the best units in the country, and the running game hasn't been as reliable as in years past. The Wolverines certainly don't have a first-round pick at quarterback to make big plays in the passing game.

The talent discrepancies will only be magnified by an immense sense of urgency from Buckeyes players and coaches to finally redeem the previous years' shortcomings in convincing fashion. **Ohio State 38, Michigan 7**

Greg Wilson: Ryan Day Exorcises UM Demons

It's been five years since Ryan Day has been able to experience a win over Michigan, and he recently said that losing three in a row to the Wolverines has been one of the worst things that has happened to his family.

This year, the two teams are as mismatched as they could be less than one year removed from Michigan winning a national championship, and this is a game Day and the Buckeyes should win. All of the talk about throwing the records out the window because this is The Game, while there might be a little bit of truth to that, it ultimately shouldn't matter too much.

That's not to say that Day doesn't deserve to celebrate getting back on top of the rivalry if and when it does happen, that's only to say that if Ohio State does somehow lose this one, there's a big problem in Columbus.

Michigan's passing attack is one of the worst in the country, and the Buckeyes should be able to key in on the rush a decent amount. Michigan has a solid defense, but we have already seen that OSU's offense can deal with that and game plan around it. The talent all around the roster should prove way too much to overcome.

I think Day wants to try to put up 70 here. I don't think they do, but I think the Buckeyes have the mentality of winning big. **Ohio State 42, Michigan 18**