

# Predictions: No. 2 Ohio State Picks Up Statement Win Over No. 5 Indiana, Moves One Step Closer To Three Main Goals For 2024 Season



Following two straight “cupcake” games against Purdue and Northwestern, No. 2 Ohio State is gearing up for perhaps its biggest game of the season to date on Saturday when it welcomes undefeated, 10-0 Indiana and brash head coach Curt Cignetti into Ohio Stadium in what should be a highly-compelling top-five matchup with Big Ten and College Football Playoff implications.

Ohio State is currently favored by double-digits by many sportsbooks against the Hoosiers, but the game could be much closer than that considering the Buckeyes lost their starting center, Seth McLaughlin, to a season-ending Achilles tear earlier this week.

With all that in mind, Buckeye Sports Bulletin took a crack at predicting this late-season Big Ten clash, set to kick off at Noon Saturday on FOX.

## **Patrick Engels: Ohio State Pulls Off Emotional Win Against Hoosiers**

At this point last week, I was under the impression that Ohio State was putting it all together at the right time, rolling against Northwestern behind an incredibly balanced offense and mostly-dominant defense.

The tenor of this season has changed significantly for the Buckeyes since then after Seth McLaughlin went down with a torn achilles in practice, ending his final collegiate season and causing several fans to wonder if Ohio State has enough on the offensive line to compete with the big boys in the stretch run of this season.

While this is a different Buckeyes team than it was just a week ago in Wrigley Field, it’s still an uber-talented one who may be as connected and together as ever following the injury to their leader, which is why I have the Buckeyes still pulling out this top-five victory on Saturday.

It’s been discussed ad nauseum all week, but this game will almost certainly come down to how the Buckeyes’ new front five of — from left to right — Donovan Jackson, Austin Siereveld, Carson Hinzman,

Tegra Tshabola and Josh Fryar — can neutralize what is a dominant Indiana defensive line.

The Hoosiers come into Columbus ranking first in the Big Ten in both sacks (31) and tackles for loss (73), but I think Ryan Day and Co. will put in a solid game plan to take away that strength. While the Buckeyes may not be able to run as efficiently — maybe they will, who knows? — they are still able to throw the ball to their playmakers with ease, with Jeremiah Smith, Emeka Egbuka and Carnell Tate all emerging as high-level passing targets towards the end of this season.

I could see Chip Kelly spreading the ball out more today against a Hoosiers secondary that ranks 21st in the nation in passing yards allowed 183.3 but has yet to see a passing offense as dynamic as Ohio State's. I think this is the day that the passing game puts it all together and picks up the running game with a number of effective quick passes. Look for TreVeyon Henderson and Quinshon Judkins to get involved in the short passing game as well.

While all eyes will be on the matchup between Ohio State's offensive line and Indiana's defensive front, the matchup that may decide the game will be the Buckeyes' defense against Indiana's offense. Jim Knowles' unit — outside of the Oregon game — has often played down to their opponent and up to their opponent all year, and I expect to see the same against an explosive Hoosiers offense that has been scoring a near-FBS-leading 43.9 points per game.

It's going to be impossible to completely slow down the Hoosiers attack, led by Ohio University transfer Kurtis Rourke, but if the Buckeyes can generate some pressure on him, he could get a bit bewildered in what is undoubtedly his biggest start of his career. This will likely come down to Denzel Burke and Davison Igbinosun making the big plays when it matters most, and I think they should be up for the challenge. They really have no other option.

As usual, my prediction is running long, so I'll leave you with this. Even with McLaughlin out, Ohio State still has arguably the best roster in all of college football, one that has become more of a cohesive unit as the weeks have gone by. I think this group will galvanize behind the veteran McLaughlin — who is still a huge part of this team from a leadership standpoint — and play with some extra juice, whether the Buckeye fans decide to make some noise in this game or not. I'll take the Buckeyes by 10 in a statement win. **Ohio State 23, Indiana 13.**

### **Bobby Gorbett: Ohio State Outlasts Indiana**

The Buckeyes' do-or-die game in their quest for the Big Ten title came a week early this year. Before the season very few fans would have predicted that the 10-0 team the Buckeyes would face in late November would be Indiana rather than Michigan.

However, behind self-assured head coach Curt Cignetti and one of the more prolific transfer classes in recent history, Indiana has grown from a good story to a bonafide Big Ten championship contender.

After the news of Seth McLaughlin's torn Achilles injury on Wednesday, I really started to think the Hoosiers would pull off the upset, and arguably their biggest win in program history over the Buckeyes.

Then head coach Ryan Day came on the Pat McAfee show on Friday on ESPN and flashed some confidence in his own group. When McAfee complimented the Hoosiers by saying they're the real deal, Day responded with, "So are we."

It was only a three-word remark, but I take it to mean Day has some pretty serious belief in his team on

Saturday.

Considering Ohio State's only time facing a high-powered passing offense ended with Oregon scoring 32 points and tallying 496 yards, I think Indiana could pose a difficult matchup with its effective passing attack. Led by quarterback Kurtis Rourke, who ranks second in the country in passing efficiency, the Hoosiers have scored 43.9 points per game, which is also second in the country.

Obviously, the Hoosiers haven't played a single legitimate Big Ten contender, but they've done everything one could expect of them against inferior opponents. One week before Nebraska nearly upset Ohio State, Indiana defeated Nebraska 56-7.

However, the Buckeyes' offense possesses plenty more talent than the Hoosiers have seen all season.

Even without McLaughlin, I still see the Buckeyes having a good day passing the ball, although the run game could struggle a bit early on in the game against the No. 1-ranked rushing defense in the country.

I think the Buckeyes will have just enough success through the air in front of their home crowd to outlast Indiana in an instant classic Big Ten clash. **Ohio State 31, Indiana 28**

Greg Wilson: **Buckeyes Make B1G Statement**

All of the talk throughout the week has been about Seth McLaughlin, and rightfully so. He has been a big part of the improvements this Ohio State offensive line has made, and losing the possible Rimington Trophy winner is obviously going to hurt the team.

But this isn't the same Ohio State as last year where a single change at the line spelled disaster in the Cotton Bowl. Carson Hinzman has another year of experience now, and has been able to learn from McLaughlin all of this year. Austin Siereveld proved early on that he wouldn't be a huge hole at the guard spot.

A top-five matchup isn't the best time to have to find out whether a rearranged front five will be able to survive, but that's the situation the Buckeyes are faced with. The Hoosiers haven't played a tough schedule, and beat a struggling Michigan team by just five points most recently, although they have been steamrolling over other opponents.

However, I do think these Hoosiers are for real. But I do think the Buckeyes defense will be tough for Kurtis Rourke to deal with, and the Ohio State offense is by far the best Indiana has seen. That's the side of the ball OSU is going to have to win this game. It will have to be both efficient and explosive when it has the opportunity, which it has proven to be able to do when needed.

The Buckeyes are looking to make a statement, and I think they will. Ohio State 31, Indiana 20