

# Predictions: Ohio State Dominates Akron In Season Opener



Ohio State opens the 2024 regular season at home, set to host its first of two straight MAC opponents with Akron coming to visit Ohio Stadium. The two teams are matching up for the 10<sup>th</sup> time with the Buckeyes holding an 8-1 lead, Akron's only win coming in 1894.

Here are our staff predictions for Akron at Ohio State, set to kick off at 3:30 p.m. on CBS. Check [BuckeyeSports.com](http://BuckeyeSports.com) every Friday for the latest staff predictions.

## **Patrick Engels: Buckeye Beatdown In Season Opener**

There's not much to predict in this one, as everybody and their mothers has Ohio State not only defeating, but absolutely obliterating severely undermanned Akron Saturday afternoon in front of what should be an energized Ohio Stadium crowd of 100,000+. The Buckeyes are a hefty 48.5-point favorite against the Zips, who are coming off three consecutive dreadful 2-10 campaigns, so this game could very well be over by the first or second quarter.

I think that will be exactly the case on Saturday, with Ohio State, led by fifth-year transfer quarterback Will Howard, scoring three or four touchdowns in the first quarter to take a commanding lead into the second, and then adding on a few more to go into halftime with the game already well in hand.

I expect Howard and Ohio State's offense to show a few kinks in the early going but then turn it on, relying on elite offensive playmakers such as running backs TreVeyon Henderson and Quinshon Judkins and wide receivers Emeka Egbuka, Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate to dominate Akron's defense in all phases. Watch for both Henderson and Judkins to explode in the first half, as the Zips allowed 147.8 yards per game on the ground last season, but also the true freshman Smith. I could see the former five-star having a breakout game and having close to 100 yards and a score.

As for the defense, defensive coordinator Jim Knowles has said all throughout the offseason that his group is "chasing" perfection, and I believe they will be pretty close to that on Saturday. The Buckeyes are simply too loaded on that end to let up anything noteworthy against a Zips offense who scored just 16.3 points per game last season and returns just one wide receiver who collected more than 150

receiving yards a year ago.

Even when the game is in hand and the subs are in, Ohio State's depth on defense will still be on full display, and I think that will allow them to preserve a shutout and give the Buckeyes an easy season-opening win. **Ohio State 58, Akron 0**

### **Bobby Gorbett: Ohio State Dismantles Akron**

It has never been easy to go into Columbus and stay competitive with the Buckeyes as a group of five or an FCS team in the Ryan Day era, and for an Akron team that has won four games in two seasons, I think it will be next to impossible. The Zips may not stir up a lot of excitement on the basis of their program tradition or any sort of success, but it's easy to see the Buckeyes playing with their hair on fire, as Buckeye coaches have put it throughout the offseason, against a team wearing a different colored jersey.

It will be difficult for the Buckeyes to do anything in their next three games that live up to the ridiculously high expectations set for them during the offseason, but I think the Buckeyes deliver a balanced, well-rounded performance. I see Will Howard looking better than some may expect as a passer, without taking too many hits as a runner. I predict Howard will go for over 200 yards passing with three touchdown passes on high-efficiency marks before the starters are ultimately removed in the third quarter. Although the entire running back rotation should seemingly be in full effect against Akron, I predict Judkins and Henderson will have the highlight plays to get them both in the Heisman conversation after week one.

As talented as Ohio State's defense is, it's really hard to foresee Akron having any success moving the football. With the talent and depth the Buckeyes have on defense, even when the starters are removed from an already-decided game, Akron will still likely struggle to move the football. The only way I see the Zips scoring is in the case of an Ohio State turnover on its own end of the field, but I don't think that happens. **Ohio State 52, Akron 0**

### **Greg Wilson: Depth Shown Off In Blowout**

One of the biggest themes of this preseason for the Buckeyes seems to be the depth that they have down the roster at seemingly nearly every position. Opening the season against a team like Akron is the perfect way to show that off, and get some players who might need to clean a few things up onto the field for in-game action.

Defensively, Jack Sawyer told reporters that Ohio State's goal every game is to shut out the opponent. A lofty expectation in Big Ten play, but a real possibility against a MAC team projected to finish near the bottom of its conference.

The messaging from Ryan Day this offseason, which is obvious in how he and the players talk, has been that the Buckeyes have something to prove and that they haven't won anything. For the guys who are returning for their senior years, that message has seemingly hit home, and they are going into this season with a different sort of drive.

Unfortunately for the Zips, they are going to be the first team to run into that attitude that the Buckeyes have this year, and it's not going to be pretty for them. Even when the starters are removed, the second and third-team players will be enough to continue to dominate. **Ohio State 56, Akron 0**