Predictions: Ohio State Flips Script On Michigan In The Game

It's been a long few years for Ohio State, which has not won against Michigan since 2019. But with everything on the line for No. 2 Ohio State and No. 3 Michigan – including a berth to the Big Ten Championship Game and likely trip to the College Football Playoff – there's no better chance for the Buckeyes to return to dominance in The Game.

Here are Buckeye Sports Bulletin's predictions for how things will shape up between Ohio State and Michigan, which is set to kick off at noon on FOX from Michigan Stadium on Saturday.

Patrick Engels: Buckeyes Leave Ann Arbor With Season-Defining Victory

There is not much left to say about this game — or The Game — which has been covered at length by both local and national media for what seems like the last month. The significance and hype for this matchup of undefeated rivals is obvious, so now it's time to put all that aside and play ball.

Ohio State will face by far its toughest test of the season on both sides of the ball, as Michigan comes into this matchup with the nation's top-ranked defense and a formidable running game on offense. Starting with the defense, the Wolverines are loaded at every single position, and have an FBS-leading 234.8 yards per game. These strengths are most felt against the pass, where they have stymied opposing quarterbacks for just 144.8 yards per game, second in the nation only to the Buckeyes.

Kyle McCord and the offense will need to find a way to limit the production of this entire unit, and that starts with him taking care of the ball. They certainly have the pieces on offense to succeed, though, starting with Marvin Harrison Jr. I see this being a statement game from the Biletnikoff Award favorite where he takes over the game at times, which will certainly help McCord calm down and find some of his other favorite targets such as Emeka Egbuka and Cade Stover. Running back TreVeyon Henderson may be the X-factor of this entire game, who can break away for a long touchdown at any time.

If there's any advantage the Buckeyes have, it's with their defense. Michigan quarterback J.J. McCarthy has looked average at best the last few weeks, which can give Knowles and his secondary a chance to completely shut down half of the Wolverines' offense. The challenge will be defending against the run, as Michigan possesses probably the best 1-2 punch on the ground in all of college football in Blake

Corum and Donovan Edwards. If the Buckeyes' defense can make the Wolverines' offense one-dimensional and stack the box for the run, they should have a good chance to limit their yards on the ground, which would be a huge advantage for the Buckeyes. In order to do this, though, I'm calling on Sonny Styles to have a big game, who will need to wrap up in space and limit any explosive plays from happening.

This game will likely come down to the wire and be decided by a series of clutch plays, and that's why I am giving the advantage to the Buckeyes. Like they have said all week, Ohio State is coming into this game as battle-tested as ever after some huge road wins over Notre Dame and Wisconsin this season. Both units know the focus and preparation it takes to win a close game on the road in front of a raucous crowd, so I see them entering the Big House with great poise and concentration. Coupled with the edge they will walk into Ann Arbor due to two straight losses to Michigan and the sign-stealing scandal, and that's a lethal combination. I don't think you can underestimate how motivated the Buckeyes will be coming into this game, which makes me lean towards picking them.

I have coach Day and Ohio State leaving Michigan with a nail-biting, grind-it-out victory due to a clutch fourth-quarter drive orchestrated by McCord followed by a key defensive stop to end the game. **Ohio State 20, Michigan 17**

Braden Moles: Ohio State Is Up To The Challenge

It doesn't get better than this. A top-three matchup between Ohio State and Michigan with everything on the line, and I think it's going to live up to the billing.

For Ohio State's offense, my biggest question is whether the offense can avoid the often-seen slow starts this season and punch Michigan in the mouth early. These Wolverines – with an overall average offense and slightly above-average rushing attack – don't seem particularly built for coming back from significant deficits, so an early lead could be the deciding factor.

But for Ohio State's offense to jump out early, it's going to need a strong performance from the offensive line against the best defensive line it's going to go up against this season. If there are open lanes for TreVeyon Henderson and Kyle McCord is kept clean, I don't see how the Wolverines will be able to hold the Buckeyes at bay.

When it comes to Ohio State's defense, it simply comes down to stopping the run. Blake Corum will be a significant factor, while Donovan Edwards has not quite been the back he was last season when he ran all over the Buckeyes. Forcing Michigan to become one-dimensional may seem ill-advised based on last season and how quarterback J.J. McCarthy threw all over the field, but with Jim Harbaugh not on the sidelines over the last few weeks, McCarthy has not looked like himself.

Heading into this season – and up until the sign stealing allegations dropped – I would have taken Michigan. I was of the belief that until Ohio State beat Michigan, holding a lead with the clock reading all zeros, it would be tough to take the Buckeyes against the Wolverines. But with the way the last few weeks have gone, I guess I just have a feeling. **Ohio State 24, Michigan 17**

Greg Wilson: Ohio State Wins Close Battle With Michigan

The sign-stealing scandal has only muddied the waters for this game further than they always are. The Buckeyes got blown out last year, so it's entirely possible they would have lost regardless, but it is a fair

question to ask how much of that was because Michigan had Ohio State's signs.

Ohio State is coming into this game almost as healthy as they can be this far into the year with Tommy Eichenberg and Mike Hall Jr. back on the defensive end of the ball, which will be important with how much the Wolverines have attacked teams with their run game recently. They finished the game against Penn State with 32 straight rushes, and J.J. McCarthy passed for only 60 yards on eight attempts. They took a similar approach to Maryland as well.

The Buckeyes offense has been rolling the past few weeks against two defenses that aren't nearly the threat that Michigan presents. TreVeyon Henderson will need to be a focal point of the offense early on so they can open up the passing game, a similar approach they have taken to a few games earlier this year as well. Marvin Harrison Jr. will get a lot of attention, but now that Emeka Egbuka's explosiveness is back and Cade Stover is available, Kyle McCord will have a lot of options to look for through the air.

It's not a hot take to say this will be a hard-fought game that is won in the fourth quarter, but that is what it will be to nobody's surprise. **Ohio State 17, Michigan 14**