

Questions Continue To Mount For Running Game, But Day Sees Reinforcements On Horizon



Ohio State's rushing attack once again struggled to get any type of significant production against Penn State on Saturday, averaging just 1.9 yards per carry for the second time in three weeks. This recent string of poor play has sparked much criticism this month from fans and media alike, something head coach Ryan Day says may be warranted.

"I wish I could point to one thing (that went wrong)," Day said on Tuesday. "But I think it was a combination again, which isn't good enough...So we have to execute better, we have to coach it better. And that's on us as coaches to get it done."

Day, who has repeatedly said the issues in the run game — as well as the offense as a whole — falls on the coaching staff, mentioned that the subpar outing against the Nittany Lions may be attributed to a number of factors ranging from the staff not having the right scheme to the runners themselves not hitting their holes. But perhaps a more noteworthy reason as to why the unit struggles lies within the staff's decision to sit sophomore Dallan Hayden and preserve his redshirt.

The Buckeyes' most efficient game on the ground this month occurred when Hayden led the charge in the backfield, where he recorded a team-high 76 rushing yards and a touchdown score on 11 carries. In the two games where he was stationed on the sidelines, however, the running back group of Miyan Williams, Chip Trayanum, Devin Brown and others rushed for 141 yards, or a 70.5 average.

Day was noncommittal on Tuesday when asked if he would reconsider his decision to keep the sophomore back off the field to preserve his redshirt, but he did lean towards inserting him into the game at some point against Wisconsin on Saturday night.

"We're going to keep pushing that this week and evaluate it again this week," Day said. "We'll see how this week goes, but we're going to push it to see if we can get him in the game this week."

While Day remains unsure of his plan with Hayden, he may be getting an important reinforcement back on Saturday that can alleviate these problems in the ground game, that being junior running back

TreVeyon Henderson. The coach, who said he expects his leading rusher, along with cornerback Denzel Burke and wide receiver Emeka Egbuka, to return this week against Wisconsin if all goes well in practice, added that having a healthy Henderson back can provide a significant boost to the unit, specifically with his explosive potential.

“We hope he makes a big impact,” Day said. “We know he can hit home runs, and he did that in the Notre Dame game and certainly that was a big difference in what we were doing. We have confidence in all of our running backs, but he does allow us the opportunity to hit a home run and be explosive. Hopefully we get a good week of practice and he can go put it on the field.”

With Ohio State potentially boasting a deeper running back room the rest of the season, Day said he thinks the issues that have plagued them the last few weeks can be resolved, starting with a prime time tilt against Luke Fickell’s Wisconsin Badgers.

“I think they are fixable, but we have to get it fixed. That’s the bottom line. And so we’ll keep grinding on that.”