

Radio Show Recap: Urban Meyer, Alex Grinch Dissect Ohio State Ahead Of Penn State



On his weekly radio show Thursday with 97.1 The Fan, head coach Urban Meyer shared insight into Ohio State as Penn State looms Saturday.

As the No. 4 Buckeyes approach the prime-time kickoff against No. 9 Nittany Lions at 7:30 p.m. on ABC, a whiteout game from Beaver Stadium in University Park, Pa., Meyer and co-defensive coordinator Alex Grinch recapped OSU's progress through the first four weeks and previewed the top-10 tilt with PSU.

Urban Meyer

- Against Penn State, Meyer pointed to ball security as “premium No. 1.” Through four games, Ohio State has only lost two turnovers.
 - “My focus is on what’s coming up here in couple days, and that’ll be huge in this game,” he said. “We all teach ball security the same way, there’s a high emphasis on it and our guys have done a good job. When you have the leaders that we have and the experienced running backs, they’re doing a very good job and (sophomore quarterback) Dwayne (Haskins) is doing a very good job.”
- Quarterback Trace McSorley, who engineers Penn State’s big-play offense, garnered more praise from Meyer. In fact, Meyer compared McSorley to former Ohio State quarterback J.T. Barrett.
 - “Very similar to J.T. Barrett,” Meyer said of McSorley. “Obviously, he’s a winner, he’s a leader and his competitiveness is what makes most quarterbacks great and he’s a great player. ... The dual-threat, the ability to run and throw and the RPO — which is run, pass, option off what the defense gives you — are very difficult to prepare for.”
- On the left side of Ohio State’s offensive line, Meyer mentioned sophomore tackle Thayer Munford and fifth-year senior guard Malcolm Pridgeon as two starters “playing at a very high level.”
 - “As a true sophomore, Thayer’s playing left tackle and playing at a very high level,” Meyer said. “... And Malcolm’s another great story.”
- Without two starters on the defensive line in juniors Nick Bosa and Robert Landers, Meyer and defensive line coach Larry Johnson applauded junior defensive tackles Dre’Mont Jones and Davon Hamilton after they combined for five tackles in Ohio State’s 49-6 rout of Tulane last Saturday.
 - “Dre’Mont Jones, obviously, is playing at a very high level,” Meyer said. “Davon Hamilton

played his best game. I know Coach J was very impressed with that.”

- One week removed from last Thursday’s surgery on a core muscle injury, Bosa continues to make strides on the road to recovery.
 - “By the way, Nick Bosa’s doing very well and getting healthy,” Meyer said.
- In his midweek press conference Wednesday at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, Meyer said he hopes to have Demario McCall involved against Penn State. Whether it comes at H-back or running back, Meyer sees McCall making an impact for Ohio State.
 - “A great young man,” Meyer said of McCall. “At running back, he’s not just quite big enough, but he’s getting stronger over the years and he’s got a great first step, good ball security and he’s actually really improved at receiver, too, so his value’s gone up and I think you’re going to see him this week, too.”
- As he nears the end of his first in-season month on the job for Ohio State, interim wide receivers coach Brian Hartline earned positive reviews from Meyer.
 - “Hart’s a great ... just a Buckeye great,” Meyer said of Hartline. “Worked so hard. Instant credibility and respect because of his performance in the NFL. He’s done a very good job.”
- Whether it comes at corner, nickel or safety, Meyer tabbed redshirt freshman Shaun Wade among Ohio State’s most improved players.
 - “He’s one of our most improved players and just works so hard,” Meyer said of Wade. “His always thing was to just go as hard as you can and now he’s doing that.”
- Ohio State is “still having conversation” about the four-game redshirt rule, but Meyer rattled off impressive freshmen and certain names set to play the rest of the fall without restriction.
 - “(Wide receiver Chris) Olave will play this year,” Meyer said. “We’re going to keep him going. ... Freshmen, you come here to play. We’re playing (linebackers) K’Vaughan Pope and Teradja Mitchell on special teams. Dallas Gant, he’s going to play the rest of the year. Then you’ve got Tyreke Smith on the defensive line, Tyler Friday. (Offensive tackle) Nick Petit-Frere, who’s going to be a very good player here. (Defensive tackle) Taron Vincent. So there’s some (players). That’s a good recruiting class.”
- Asked about former Ohio State players in the NFL, Meyer took pride in the noted number of Buckeyes increasingly reaching the next level.
 - “They’re recruiting,” Meyer said. “Everybody knows these guys. The tradition started many, many years ago. But in 2012 to now, I want to say we have as many first-rounders as anybody and many, many draft picks. Not only that, but just the way they are. They’re good guys, they

Alex Grinch

- As Ohio State’s defense braces for Penn State’s offense, Grinch noted the various schemes the Buckeyes have faced over the first few weeks of the season in preparing them for the next task.
 - “We’ve seen kind of a shift in NFL from Rutgers and the tempo in TCU, so we’ve seen several different styles,” he said. “But what’s important from a staff standpoint — if we make sure from a game plan there’s some commonalities, there’s still certain gaps that have to be covered and there’s certain receivers that warrant your attention. In any event, what you’re trying not to do is be so specific to the opponent that you’re not able to carry over from the week prior.”

- In the secondary, as Ohio State continues to search for an everyday starter next to junior Jordan Fuller at safety, Grinch discussed sophomores Isaiah Pryor and Jahsen Wint.
 - “With the exception of Jordan, you’re talking about all sophomores and Shaun’s a redshirt freshman,” he said. “What you need to see from those guys, week in and week out, is you’ve got to see improvement and not just on Saturdays. Obviously, that’s when it counts and that’s certainly most important, but we use the example with them — if this Thursday is no better than last Thursday’s practice, then we’ve got problems. ... I certainly think, at our best, we’re trending in the right direction. At our worst, we’ve got to eliminate those issues. I don’t think that’s unique to us, but in the same token, we’ve got to make sure our best Saturday is this Saturday.”
- Grinch scouted McSorley’s underrated ability to extend plays, neither confirming nor denying the suggested idea of Ohio State potentially using a spy but saying “we’ll have a good plan for that.”
 - “If you don’t kind corral him early, he has the ability to scramble out,” Grinch said. “Now, all of a sudden, the five-yard route turns into a 15-yard route. If completed and uncovered, can turn into an explosive. What is so special about him is ability to throw the deep ball as well. Those are the planned shots. Just the accuracy on those throws is unique and he makes it all go, so just a real challenge.

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