

Ryan Day, Buckeyes Focused On Task At Hand, Staying Motivated Despite Being Perceived As National Title Contenders



Despite it being somewhat unthinkable after the Michigan loss, Ohio State has turned itself into the consensus favorite to win the national championship following its blowout wins over Tennessee and Oregon in the College Football Playoff.

With every talking head seemingly picking the Buckeyes to win it all heading into their CFP semifinal matchup against No. 5 seed Texas on Friday night, the challenge for Ohio State now turns into how it can continue to play with an edge and “chip on their shoulder,” a brash mentality that head coach Ryan Day and his team used to their advantage against the Volunteers and Ducks.

While this may be difficult to maintain, Day said on Friday afternoon that his team will have no problem keeping their edge come Friday night at the Cotton Bowl, as the opportunity to play for a national championship and continue this 2024-25 season is plenty motivating.

“We don’t need any extra motivation to win this game, but one thing that does motivate our team is an opportunity for the team to play for another week together,” Day said at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center in his first press conference since the 41-21 Rose Bowl win. “This is a great group of guys that cares a lot about each other. They have fun with each other. They love competing with each other. You can see their passion on the field when they get on the field.

“These guys, they care a lot about each other we’re just going to focus on the execution and making sure that we’re preparing ourselves as best as we possibly can to go play this game against these guys on Friday night, and that’s it. Nothing else matters. Nothing that’s happened previously is going to have any effect on what’s going on, other than learning from our experiences.”

That motivation to keep the season going has compelled Day and the Buckeyes to be locked into executing the task at hand this week — that being defeating former OSU quarterback Quinn Ewers and the Texas Longhorns in Arlington, Texas. The Buckeyes’ coach revealed to the media on Friday that he wasted no time getting to work on the Longhorns following the Rose Bowl win, spending each and every hour of the long flight from Los Angeles to Columbus diving into the film while others were sleeping.

“I took the first two hours of the flight and went through the film, made a bunch of notes so that when we got in here the next day, we knew — we ended up getting home at about 5 a.m., so it was a quick turnaround, but we wanted to get all that out of the way so that when we’re in here, we could get get going. But after those two hours, (I) jumped on Texas and just went right into it.

“(I was) kind of running on adrenaline a little bit, didn’t really sleep on the flight. A lot of people were knocked out. I wasn’t. I was grinding on that film trying to figure out how to get a head start.... So I tried to get my eyes on it, and then slept for a few hours and got back in it.”

Day’s focus on football and the task at hand has seemed to trickle down to the players. Before the Buckeyes got some shut eye on the flight, Day said many of his guys spent the entire bus ride after the game talking through what just transpired on the gridiron at the Rose Bowl, a unique showing of passion for the game and each other that he thinks has translated onto the field this postseason, and must continue to do so if they want to continue advancing towards a national title.

“We’re on the bus after the game. I’m on bus one with the defense and my family and some of the other coaches and their family, and in the back, you can just hear the defensive players talking about almost every play. They were talking about football the entire ride, talking about this play and that play, and giving each other heck for, ‘you left me on this one, you didn’t make this call,’ or whatever it was.

“They just love ball. They love playing together. They love the grind of it. They love walkthroughs. They love practice. They’re in the building right now getting extra film work in, and they love playing with each other. You can see it with the way that they’re playing, they’re playing right now with great passion. The physicality and the running and the hitting that was going on on the field was tremendous in that game, and that has to continue (against Texas).”