

Ryan Day Hoping For More Running Back Production Against Western Kentucky



Through its first two games against Indiana and Youngstown State, Ohio State has shown they are capable of possessing an efficient run game, using almost its entire backfield to rush for a combined 266 yards on 58 carries along with four touchdowns. While averaging 4.6 yards per carry is nothing to scoff at, head coach Ryan Day said on Thursday that he is still looking for consistency out of his backfield.

“Yeah, we want to get four yards every time we run the football,” Day said. “That’s everybody’s goal. And then after that you could go make a play. But we have to get downhill. We have to make four yards every play and haven’t done that enough, we haven’t.”

The Buckeyes showed flashes of explosiveness in the run game against Youngstown State — specifically with the now-healthy TreVeyon Henderson — who knocked off a 30-yard score in the third quarter. But Day noted that there needs to be an even larger emphasis on this aspect of the offense, especially with the pass-happy Western Kentucky coming to Ohio Stadium later today.

“We’re going to keep swinging at this thing and keep pushing it because that’s a big part of our offense, is making sure that we can establish the run,” Day said. “Now we knew last week that they were going to try to run the ball and milk the clock, so we threw the ball a little bit more early on and played a little bit faster to try to keep the number of plays up as much as we could. But now it’s important this week to establish the run.”

While the efficiency of the Buckeyes’ running game will likely be determined by the well-documented play of the new-look offensive along with the trio of running backs — Henderson, Chip Trayanum and Miyan Williams — utilized in the backfield so far, Day said it will come down to a total team effort. He specifically mentioned the ability for his wide receivers to block on the outside, which he says can allow his backs to get downfield for longer gains.

“That’s what turns good plays into great plays,” Day said. “It’s one thing to run the football for 4 and 5 yards and the safety comes up and makes the play. But if the perimeter guys are involved and they’re blocking, that turns a 5-yard gain into a 30-to-40-yard gain, like you saw in the game. So we need to keep pushing those guys, it takes all 11 in the run game.”

As the Buckeyes prepare to put a better offensive product on the field today against the Hilltoppers, Day said he and his staff have made it a priority this week in practice to get his entire offense committed to the run game. This, according to the Buckeyes’ coach, will only come to fruition if the entire unit attacks the field with focus and discipline, something he said they have worked to accomplish in the days leading up to the game.

“We spent a lot of time trying to figure that part of it out because there’s a lot of pieces that come with the run game, Day said. If one guy is off, the run game doesn’t work. And so we spent a lot of time making sure that everybody’s tight, knows where they’re going and making sure they know what they’re doing and that it’s all phased together the right way.”