

Ryan Day, Jim Knowles Comment On Denzel Burke's Ejection



Ohio State senior cornerback Denzel Burke could not have had a more varied first two games. In the Buckeyes' season-opening game, Burke fulfilled his goal to be more aggressive as a ball hawk, stripping a ball away from an Akron receiver to come up with his first interception of the season in the second quarter.

Against Western Michigan the next week, Burke didn't even make it to the second quarter. Issuing what the officials deemed to be an illegal hit, Burke was ejected from the game with seconds to go in the first quarter for targeting. Having nearly lost cornerback Davison Igbinosun from the Akron game for targeting, the Buckeyes were dealt the real thing to Burke in the 56-0 win over Western Michigan.

Targeting, which prohibits players from leading with the crown, or the top of one's helmet, ejects the player who commits the penalty from the game and issues the team that committed the foul, a 15-yard penalty.

On the play in question, Western Michigan running back Jaden Nixon rumbled close to a first down before being tackled by Burke and safety Caleb Downs. Although it appeared as though Burke lowered his helmet in tackling Nixon, which is often a sign of leading with the crown of the helmet, he also seemed to hit Nixon with the side of his helmet rather than the crown of the helmet.

Head coach Ryan Day didn't come right out and say it during his press conference on Tuesday, but he might have disagreed with the call.

"I did (get an explanation on the call) and I think there were a couple of different opinions of that after the game," Day said. "I guess that's all I can really say."

With targeting calls triggering an automatic replay, the replay officials had a chance to overturn the call against Burke as they had for Igbinosun the week prior but opted to confirm the call on the field. After the close call went against Burke and the Buckeyes, Day didn't have much to say to his shutdown cornerback after the play.

"I didn't really give him much of a coaching point there, I thought he was giving great effort," Day said. "I told him in the moment, there's not much you can do about it right now and then I'll try to make sure I go to bat for you, the best I can."

For Ohio State defensive coordinator, Jim Knowles, the simple coaching point was for Burke to keep his

head up through the tackle.

“It’s unfortunate, I understand the rules and trying to protect the players. Just have to keep your head up,” Knowles said. “Anything we can learn is to keep your head up. It’s been something since football players put on helmets the natural tendency is to kind of drop your head. I think that can eliminate a lot of errors and potential injuries is just see what you hit and keep your head up.”

The good news for Burke is that his penalty was committed in the first half, meaning he will be eligible to play in the entirety of the Buckeyes’ next game against Marshall.