

Ohio State Expected To Be At Full Strength Against Michigan



Ohio State will enter its highly-anticipated matchup against Michigan on Saturday as healthy as they have been since the beginning of the season, with head coach Ryan Day saying on Wednesday that all of his key players — besides safety Lathan Ransom — will be ready to go for Saturday’s rivalry game.

Speaking with Paul Keels and Jim Lachey during his weekly radio appearance with 97.1 The Fan, Day said that each of his three contributing players who missed last week’s contest against Minnesota — quarterback Devin Brown, linebacker Tommy Eichenberg and defensive tackle Michael Hall Jr. — will be active for this weekend’s undefeated showdown in Ann Arbor.

“(It’ll be) good to get some of those guys back,” Day said. “We won’t get Lathan back. But good to get the other guys back.”

While Brown may make an impact in short-yardage situations in offense and Hall filling up the interior on defense, the Buckeyes will likely benefit from Eichenberg’s return the most, who is the unquestioned leader of the defense with a team-high 73 tackles. Day said he held Eichenberg out of last week’s win over Minnesota out of precaution, where he wanted to ensure that he was at full health for the most significant game of the season against the Wolverines.

“At some point, you have to take a step back and just recognize, ‘What’s at stake here?’ Day said. “I just felt like at the time, it was the right thing to do to make sure he’s at full capacity going into this one.”

The Buckeyes will be at or near full strength for the first time since the start of the season, as the team has dealt with a substantial amount of injuries for a good portion of the year. Since Ohio State’s Week 1 matchup against Indiana, the Buckeyes have been forced to play at times without a number of their key contributors, including wide receiver Emeka Egbuka, running back TreVeyon Henderson and tight end Cade Stover on offense, and cornerback Denzel Burke, safeties Ransom and Josh Proctor, Eichenberg and Hall on defense.

With all of those names now healthy, Ohio State will have its full arsenal back against their arch rivals. But Day said he will need his entire roster to be ready and able to take the field in case their number is abruptly called on.

This is a mentality he remembered his team benefited from during his coaching debut in The Game in 2017, when he served as Urban Meyer's offensive coordinator. That year, Day recalled his team rallying around backup quarterback Dwayne Haskins to relieve the injured J.T. Barrett en route to a 31-20 win, a showing of perseverance and toughness he wants his team to replicate in the 2023 iteration of the rivalry.

"You're going to need depth here," Day said. "You just never know how things are going to shake out. Shoot, I remember that first game I was ever (a part of) (in 2017), J.T got hurt before the game. You just never know what you have. So everybody that goes on that bus has to be ready to play."