

Ryan Day Sees Improvement, But Still Looking For Consistency From O-Line



After a sluggish start in Indiana's Memorial Stadium, Ohio State's offensive line continued its disjointed play in their home opener against Youngstown State, committing three costly penalties for 35 yards and allowing an inferior Penguins defense to generate two sacks and four tackles for loss. Despite the lackluster play, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said on Tuesday that he was encouraged by the unit's efforts last Saturday, as it can serve as a possible step in the right direction.

"I thought the protection, overall, was solid," Day said. "I think they gave Kyle some good time (in the pocket). We have to keep building on that. I thought their effort and their finish was much better. There were some good plays where I thought we came off the ball."

Day — who simply responded "No" when asked on Saturday if he thinks the offensive line is where it needs to be — said his front five of Josh Simmons, Donovan Jackson, Carson Hinzman, Matthew Jones and Josh Fryar showed signs of improvement by committing to and executing the running game. Ohio State rushed for 123 total yards on 27 attempts (4.6 per carry) against the Penguins, while also using six different rushers on the day.

"That's part of growing a team and building a team," Day said. "I thought we did a nice job a couple times of getting the ball to the perimeter and creating some explosive plays, but ultimately, we also have to run the ball inside the tackles. So there's a little bit of both going on there, especially in a game early in the season."

While Day was encouraged by his unit's performance, he still sees major room for improvement. One aspect they need to fix may be limiting penalties, which, on Saturday, mostly fell on San Diego State transfer Josh Simmons. Simmons was called for half of Ohio State's fouls on Saturday, where he was flagged for a 10-yard holding call in the first quarter and then a 15-yard hands to the face penalty in the second. According to Day, he and his staff have worked with Simmons in practice to determine the best way he can fit and thrive on the line.

"It's just constant communication," Day said. "And that's on us coaches to make sure that we're doing

the right things that he can do and allowing him to play free and not worry about making mistakes, but at the same time, think clearly and be able to put his best foot forward, put his best play on the field. If we're doing too many things, then we have to cut back, if we're not doing enough to put him in a situation to be successful then we have to look at that. And he has to just keep growing. But the more he plays the better he's going to be, because the talent is there."

With two weeks of practice remaining until the Buckeyes' Sept. 23 bout with Notre Dame, Day said there is more urgency to clean up the miscues on the offensive line, as they need to prove that they can perform at a high level.

"Again, overall consistency is something that we're working on," Day said. "And we have to get better, but there was some improvement there. We expect on third-and-1, third-and-2, third-and-3 to execute and get first downs. There were a couple penalties in there as well. So, we have to clean those things up."