

Ryan Day, Teammates Praise “Clutch” Kyle McCord For Game-Winning Performance



Amidst the pure elation and celebration in the Ohio State locker room following its dramatic 17-14 victory over Notre Dame, head coach Ryan noticed one thing was amiss. No, it wasn't his questionable dance moves, or his passionate post-game interview with NBC's Kathryn Tappen, but it was that he had yet to receive the game ball from the still-shocked Notre Dame Stadium field.

Luckily for Coach Day, he was handed that game ball soon after the celebrations waned, and there was no hesitation over who he would give it to.

"I really haven't told anybody this, but I didn't have the game ball as we were going to the locker room," Day said during his weekly radio show on Friday. "The locker room was chaotic. I mean, it was one of my favorite locker rooms I have ever been in in my life. The guys were just so excited about the win. And then finally, after we got the dust settled, they handed me the ball.

"And I just kind of tapped Kyle (McCord) on the shoulder and said 'You better put that away for a long time, because they can't take this one away from you,' he continued. "And I winked at him, and he was smiling. So he has the game ball somewhere, and he deserves it."

Day, who witnessed his starting quarterback orchestrate a memorable 12-play, 65-yard drive late in the fourth quarter to propel the Buckeyes to a last-second 17-14 victory over then-No.9 Notre Dame last Saturday, said McCord earned the recognition and praise due to the unique calmness and leadership he displayed throughout the whole sequence. Facing a 14-10 deficit with 1:25 remaining, McCord successfully completed third-down conversions of 10, 7 and 19 yards, respectively, along with a successful fourth-down attempt of seven yards, all of which extended the game and led to an eventual 1-yard touchdown score from running back Chip Trayanum.

"I mean, to be in that situation and handle it the way he did," Day said. "(It shows that) he has a lot of poise. He does. And he has a lot of trust in his teammates. And the offensive line had to give them time. It wasn't always perfect, but they were screening and finishing at the end. The receivers were working hard to get open, but you got to give him a lot of credit. In some really big spots, the fourth-and-7, the

third-and-19, those are not ideal situations to be in, but (he was) very clutch.”

This is a sentiment that is shared across the locker room, with several of his teammates giving McCord his flowers for being able to stay cool, calm and collected with the game, and potentially the season, on the line. Junior wide receiver Emeka Egbuka, who was on the receiving end of the team’s third-and-10 and third-and-19 conversions on the final drive, said he had full faith in his freshman year roommate to lead the offense down the field for the game-winning score.

“I kind of knew that it would just happen,” Egbuka said at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center on Wednesday. “Stuff like that doesn’t just happen by chance. It’s not like he got lucky or anything like that. He’s always that way, 24/7. If the offense is shaky, or in a tough spot, everybody can look at Kyle, and he’s going to be the most calm person on the field. So that’s something that’s really encouraging, to have (somebody like McCord) in the pocket. And we all knew that was gonna be the case when he took over the starting role.”

McCord, who mentioned that he hasn’t felt “rattled” during a game since middle school, said this unwavering self-confidence, coupled with his detailed preparation in the film room, has given him the tools to thrive amidst adversity under the bright lights as Ohio State’s starting quarterback — something he has prepared himself for since he arrived on campus in 2021.

“I think it was just a matter of time until everything kind of played itself out,” McCord said. “One of my favorite sayings is ‘What’s done in the dark will always come to light. And, it’s just countless reps and hours and hours in the film room, preparing all for that one moment. So I felt confident walking out there.”