

Schiano Praises Ohio State's Linebackers



Big plays have been a big concern for the Ohio State defense so far in 2018.

In the season opener against Oregon State, the Buckeyes gave up scoring runs of 78 and 80 yards in a 77-31 win. In week three against No. 15 TCU in Arlington, Texas, the Horned Frogs set a program record with a 93-yard touchdown run, the longest play from scrimmage every allowed by an Ohio State defense.

The Buckeyes are undefeated, and the defense has largely played well, but those chunk plays have brought more questions than answers. Some of those questions have been about the Ohio State linebackers, but defensive coordinator Greg Schiano said they've been one of the most fundamentally sound groups on the team so far this year.

"I think the linebackers have played pretty well, actually," Schiano said.

He went on to explain that, while no linebacker was in position to make a play on TCU's long touchdown run, that wasn't due to them being out of position. Ohio State was cheating toward another scheme on that play, Schiano said. The Horned Frogs instead did something they had never shown on tape - and that combination led to the big play.

"Sometimes when you cheat, you get (hit)," he said.

Schiano went on to explain that the linebackers can certainly still improve, but the group has come a long way. It makes a difference to have sophomore Tuf Borland back in the lineup full time as well after he made his first start of the season against TCU.

"The linebackers, I think, we're not perfect by any means," Schiano said. "But I think we're really playing much more assignment-sound football than we were even in training camp. I think they're getting better and better.

"And then (at middle linebacker) having Tuf in there for a bunch of plays was nice and (sophomore Baron Browning) played well, so that was good."

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