

Texas Head Coach Steve Sarkisian Stands By Statement That Longhorns Are Massive Underdog In Cotton Bowl Clash With Buckeyes



The 89th iteration of the Cotton Bowl may be the most significant of them all, with the bowl welcoming two perennial college football powerhouses — No. 5 seed Texas and No. 8 seed Ohio State — into AT&T Stadium on Friday night with a trip to the national championship game on the line.

While each of those factors may point to this being a classic in the making, many believe the contrary will occur in “Jerry World.” The Buckeyes, fresh off two blowout wins against Tennessee and Oregon in the first two rounds of the College Football Playoff, are once again expected to roll through the Longhorns and continue their push for a national title, with some picking them to cover the -6-point spread and cruise to the national title game by multiple scores.

Texas head coach Steve Sarkisian has certainly been aware of these types of conversations, saying earlier in the week that he feels the Longhorns are “massive underdogs” entering the contest and that they will need to play their best game in order to leave Arlington, Texas, with a victory.

“We’re going to need everything we have to try to win this game. Clearly, we’re massive underdogs,” Sarkisian said on Friday. “Nobody’s going to give us a shot. So we’re going to need all that we can to try to win this game.”

The Longhorns’ leader doubled down on those comments six days later during he and Ryan Day’s joint press conference held inside AT&T Stadium. When asked to explain why he felt the Longhorns are massive underdogs for the Cotton Bowl, Sarkisian said that it is clear that Ohio State is the clear favorite to win the national championship because it has played some of its best football at the right time, making the Buckeyes a tough opponent at the Cotton Bowl.

“I think a lot of times in this format now — we’re kind of in this NFL format model — it’s not always about who was the best team for 12 games, it’s who is playing the best football this time of year,” Sarkisian said. “And I think we can all agree what Coach Day has done coming out of that Michigan game, and what they’ve been able to do since the playoffs started, has been tremendous. That’s a credit to Coach Day and his staff for re-galvanizing that roster and getting them going.

“I could probably pull everybody in this room and you probably all agree they’re the favorite to win the

game, and that's okay. But that's football, that's sports. That's why we have to do what we do. So I'm not going to back off."

Sarkisian, who was complimentary of the Buckeyes throughout the over 30-minute press conference, also said that what really matters when the two teams kick off come Friday night will be whether or not they can perform at the highest level.

This is a sentiment shared by Day, who said that none of the talk or results that came before this matchup have any impact on what goes on at AT&T Stadium. What really matters, according to the coach, is the preparation and plan they put in for this matchup, as well as which team can best execute that plan come Friday night.

"I just feel like every week is a whole new week," Day said. "Certainly the way that Texas won the game last week, there's momentum there, and I think it's important for all of us — if we have momentum — to keep it, and if we don't, we have to go get it. But the truth is that nothing that Ohio State has done or Texas has done up until this week has anything to do with what's going to happen in this game. Zero. And if any of you think otherwise, just go back a couple weeks and see where we were a couple weeks ago.

"So every single week, the slate is wiped clean, and you have to start from scratch again. And that starts with your meetings, with your walkthrough and with your preparation. So the bottom line is this game is going to be played. The team that plays the best and executes the best is going to win the game.

"There are a lot of opinions out there. I'm sure all of you know what everyone's going to expect, but ultimately, it's going to come down to the players on the field and how they play."