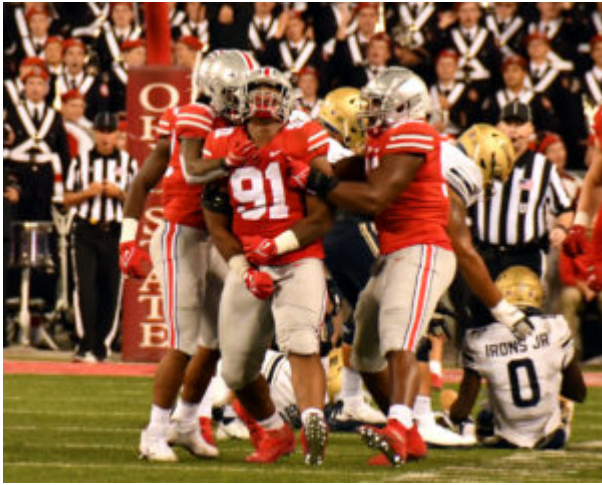


Three Questions Ahead Of Ohio State-Rutgers



1. Are these young Buckeyes ready for another road trip?

Ohio State has taken one road trip this season to Minneapolis, and came out of it with a win, albeit a shaky one. The Buckeyes looked rattled early on by a hostile crowd – the first that about half of this team has ever seen in college football – but rallied to weather that storm, riding big plays to the win.

Four weeks later, Ohio State has played three home games, twice against G5 foes with two combined wins between them, and its lineup is suffering from a bit of Benjamin Button syndrome, aging backward. After starting the season with vets at safety, linebacker (two), on the defensive line (two) and halfback and left guard, Ohio State enters this game with a redshirt freshman safety in Lathan Ransom, a pair of young linebackers in Cody Simon and Steele Chambers, freshmen contributors all over the defensive line, a new left guard as Thayer Munford deals with an injury and a true freshman halfback.

It comes with the territory of a youth movement, even one that the Buckeyes needed to usher in. It's time to test those youngsters.

2. What can a healthy C.J. Stroud do?

If Ryan Day and C.J. Stroud are to be believed, we've yet to see a fully healthy Stroud this season, after he sustained a shoulder injury that nagged him throughout each of his first three games and held him out of Ohio State's week of preparation for Akron. Day has said that Stroud had a good week of practice and will be the starter. Whether he's fully healthy now is still at least a bit of a question, but we can assume he's further along than he has been.

Of course, that begs the question – what is a healthy Stroud capable of? Can he hit those deep balls that he's been just long on so far this season? Will his intermediate throws be a bit more consistent?

3. Can Ohio State's defense withstand some trickery?

Without much in the way of consistent offense, coordinator Sean Gleeson has frequently turned to halfback passes and all sorts of chicanery to pick up yardage. Rutgers did it last season, and we can only assume it'll do the same here especially given that this Ohio State defense isn't exactly known for its discipline.

Can the somewhat easily tricked Buckeyes play assignment sound football for 60 minutes? Or, at least, long enough to hold the Rutgers offense back? Either way, expect some fireworks and some trickery on Saturday afternoon.