

Three Questions Answered: Iowa



Ohio State started the second half of its 2022 campaign with a 54-10 win over Iowa on Saturday. Although the 54 points jump off the page, the Buckeyes' efforts were largely led by their defense — which forced six turnovers and held the Hawkeyes to just 158 yards of total offense.

Prior to the Buckeyes' bout with the Hawkeyes, Buckeye Sports Bulletin posed three pressing questions about the game. Now, BSB is taking a look back at those questions and seeing how Ohio State fared in those categories.

1. Will Jaxon Smith-Njigba Play, And What Might His Impact Be?

Wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba did return to the lineup for the Buckeyes on Saturday, however, his role was largely limited.

The Rockwall, Texas, native hauled in just one of his three targets, picking up 7 yards on the lone reception. Smith-Njigba's exit from the game looked fairly questionable, as he came up limping after his final target of the afternoon during the second quarter.

Despite the noticeable limp, OSU head coach Ryan Day said that Smith-Njigba had just reached his pre-determined maximum number of snaps for the game.

"I think he had about 20 plays, he was right in that range, then once he got to that number on that drive, that was it," Day said.

2. Can Ohio State's Offense Overcome Iowa's Defense?

From the outcome of Ohio State's first six possessions, it appeared that the Iowa defense had some momentum in slowing the Buckeyes' high-powered offense.

Ohio State started its first drive from the Iowa 29-yard line, but could only muster a yard before turning to kicker Noah Ruggles — who went on to burry a 46-yard field goal. On the Buckeyes' next drive, quarterback C.J. Stroud took a crushing blow and fumbled after a hit from defensive end Joe Evans, who then went on to scoop up the fumble and take it 13 yards for the touchdown. After a 10-play, 75-yard touchdown drive on their third series, the Buckeyes started each of their next two possessions from within Iowa territory but could not find the end zone, settling for a pair of field goals. In total, the Buckeyes started four drives within Iowa territory during the first half and finished with 12 total points on those drives.

After Ohio State tossed an interception and punted on its first two drives to open the second half, the Buckeyes hit their stride. The Buckeyes ripped off four straight scoring drives, all of which were capped off by a touchdown pass off of the arm of Stroud.

Despite the second-half resurgence from the Ohio State offense, the Buckeyes still tallied season-lows in total yards (360), rushing yards (66) and third-down efficiency (3-13). Ohio State did remain perfect in the red zone on the season, going 7-for-7 against the Hawkeyes with five touchdowns and two field goals.

3. Will Iowa Find A Groove On Offense?

From the result of Iowa's first play from scrimmage, it was apparent that it was going to be a long day for quarterback Spencer Petras and company.

On Petras' first pass attempt of the day, he rolled out to his left before tossing a pass right into the hands of Ohio State safety Tanner McCalister for an interception. McCalister's pick served as Petras' first turnover on a day in which he went on to register three total turnovers (two interceptions and a fumble). Backup quarterback Alex Padilla didn't fare much better on his first pass attempt, as he just missed tight end Sam LaPorta and the ball tipped off of his hands into McCalister's for his second pick of the day. The Buckeyes went on to force six Iowa turnovers.

While the turnovers clearly changed the complexion of the game, Iowa's offense also struggled to move the ball. The Hawkeyes tallied just 158 yards of total offense and eight first downs while converting on just one of 13 third-down attempts. Iowa also went 1-4 on fourth downs.