

Three Questions Answered: Notre Dame



All told, things didn't go exactly according to plan in Ohio State's 21-10 win over Notre Dame to open the season. In a reversal of expectations, the Buckeyes' offense struggled to find a rhythm while the defense kept Ohio State in game.

Here were the key factors to the game and how Ohio State handled them.

1. CAN OHIO STATE'S DEFENSE STOP MICHAEL MAYER?

Notre Dame tight end Michael Mayer - as well as most of the Irish offense - ultimately ended up being not much of a factor against Ohio State.

Mayer was targeted eight times by Notre Dame quarterback Tyler Buchner, and just five of those were pulled in for receptions, totaling 32 yards on the night. The majority of his contribution came on a 17-yard grab in the third quarter.

"It's really difficult," Knowles said of defending Mayer. "It's hard to get doubles on that guy. I thought we did decent. He's going to be in a lot of one-on-one matchups and we had our guys ready to play that, but they were aware."

2. HOW WILL PARIS JOHNSON AND DAWAND JONES HANDLE NOTRE DAME DEFENSIVE END ISAIAH FOSKEY?

Notre Dame's defensive line issued a stiff challenge to Ohio State's offensive line, specifically for tackles Paris Johnson Jr. and Dawand Jones. They stepped up to the challenge, though as the Irish finished with just one sack that came on Ohio State's first drive of the game courtesy of nose tackle Howard Cross III.

Foskey finished with just four tackles on the evening and was mostly a non-factor. The Irish had just two tackles for the loss the entire game.

3. HOW WILL NOTRE DAME QUARTERBACK TYLER

BUCHNER FARE IN HIS DEBUT?

It was an up-and-down debut for Buchner, who was making his first career start for Notre Dame. He attempted just 18 passes on the evening (compared to 30 rushing attempts for the offense) and completed 10 of them for 177 yards.

A good chunk of Buchner's total came on Notre Dame's first play of the game in which he connected with wide receiver Lorenzo Styles on a 54-yard gain, and that would wind up the longest play of the night for both teams.

Buchner also faced intense pressure from Ohio State's defensive line, being dropped three times - twice from linebacker Tommy Eichenberg and once from defensive tackle Mike Hall, arguably Ohio State's two most dominant players on field Saturday.