

# Three Questions Asked: Arkansas State



Ohio State will take part in the first of two tune-up games this season on Saturday, set for a noon kickoff at Ohio Stadium against the Arkansas State Red Wolves.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is taking a look at the most pressing questions facing the Buckeyes as they prepare for the second game of the season.

## 1. Will Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Julian Fleming play?

The wide receiver room for Ohio State appears to be undergoing somewhat of an injury bug to begin the season. Fifth-year wideout Kamryn Babb remains out after a setback in fall camp and third-year Julian Fleming, a game-time decision against Notre Dame that ultimately did not take the field, is still waiting to make his season debut. Ohio State is also awaiting the return of star junior Jaxon Smith-Njigba, who left the game against the Irish with a leg injury.

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day indicated that Smith-Njigba and Fleming could both play, but that the Buckeyes aren't going to rush their return. This could be a week where Ohio State lets them rest up and work back to being fully healthy before the brunt of the schedule begins on Sept. 24 with a home contest against Wisconsin.

## 2. How late do Ohio State's starters play into the game?

This is a game that could get out of hand quickly. Arkansas State had one of the worst defenses in college football last season, allowing 38.6 points per game (124th) and allowing 506 yards per game, second worst in the country.

Ohio State's offense struggled at points against the Irish, especially with the loss of Smith-Njigba, but this could be a game to help get things back in shape. If the Buckeyes take a significant and early lead, though, there's little reason to keep the starters in for longer than needed, especially with Toledo on the schedule for next week.

If the defense does its part and pitches close to a shutout in the first half while the offense puts up a respectable performance, it's hard to imagine that Ohio State's starters stay in much beyond halftime, though Day has been known to keep them in for a drive or two in the second half during blowouts. With the Buckeyes facing several injuries, we'll see whether he wants to take that risk this week.

### **3. Does Kyle McCord or Devin Brown make a statement?**

If Ohio State's first-team offense does exit the game sooner rather than later, it could open the door for the Buckeyes' remaining scholarship quarterbacks to make an impact.

Second-year signal-caller Kyle McCord is the clear backup - Day has said so himself - but it could be a situation where McCord gets a quarter of action and then freshman Devin Brown gets some time in the game.

Both quarterbacks are simply trying to be the best backup they can right now, but games like these are the first steps in the burgeoning quarterback battle that will begin in full this upcoming spring and into next fall to follow in Stroud's footsteps.