

Toledo Looking Forward To Challenge At Ohio Stadium



The brights will be light at Ohio Stadium on Saturday as No. 3 Ohio State hosts Toledo for a primetime matchup, but the Rockets aren't afraid entering the game. Despite playing at Ohio State as a 31.5-point underdogs, the Rockets are looking forward to the big-game atmosphere against a top-five opponent.

"I think our guys look forward to playing in these type of games," Toledo head coach Jason Candle said. "Our guys are mostly from the state of Ohio or a four-hour footprint here, so they know the tradition and they have respect for what goes on in Columbus, or South Bend, Ind., last year or the University of Michigan last year or any of these places and probably most of these guys wanted to be recruited by these types of places.

"I think it's an opportunity for them to go and play on that stage, something that doesn't happen each and every weekend."

The Rockets will lead one of the nation's top offenses - one that's averaging 46 points and 424 yards per game - into Ohio Stadium, with quarterback Dequan Finn leading the way for Toledo. Finn has thrown for 388 yards this season and rushed for 138 yards while accounting for six total touchdowns.

Defensively, the Rockets have allowed just 10 points this season across a 37-0 win over Long Island and a 55-10 win over UMass. One of Toledo's defensive leaders has been linebacker Dallas Gant, who joined the Rockets after transferring out of Ohio State last season.

"It's been about Toledo and being a leader and how he can help Toledo win and how he's turned the page for a new opportunity for himself individually," Candle said. "I've got a lot of respect for that.

"If I know Dallas like I think I do, I think he'll go out with a level head, play within the scheme of the defense, make plays come to him and not step out and try to do too much because of a chip on his shoulder or something to prove."

Finn and Gant, among others, provide a potential challenge for Ohio State, who will wrap the non-conference scheduled against the Rockets before taking on Wisconsin next week. Though Toledo has some exciting players, according to 247Sports' team talent composite rankings, the Buckeyes have the No. 3 roster in the country, while Toledo's checks in at No. 83.

Even with the talent gap, Candle is preparing his squad to play their best possible game against Ohio State.

“This is a tremendous football team. (There are) three preseason All-Americans on offense,” Candle said. “This is a coaching staff that does as good as anybody does in the country. I think there’s lots of things here that are in play and lots of different variables that you have to bring into focus. You’ve got to bring your A game.

“You have to play really, really well and play sound. You have to get a couple breaks that go your way and you’ve got to hang in there for a 60-minute fight,” he continued. “That’s what we’re expecting to do and I’m sure that’s what they prepare each and every week for to, no matter who you’re playing.”