

Welcome To Week 8: Penn State



The first six weeks of the season were simply an appetizer, and now it's time for the main course as third-ranked Ohio State gets set to host No. 7 Penn State at Ohio Stadium on Saturday at noon.

With perhaps the best team in James Franklin's tenure at Penn State, it will be the Nittany Lions' best shot in several seasons to take down the Buckeyes, which they are looking to do for the first time since 2016. Check back every Monday at BuckeyeSports.com for a brief preview of the Buckeyes' upcoming opponent, with stories and features throughout the week.

OPPONENT: Penn State (6-0)

Notre Dame was Ohio State's first test of the season a few weeks back, but with the Nittany Lions coming to Ohio Stadium on Saturday, this will be at an entirely different level.

Penn State boasts perhaps the nation's best defense, limiting teams to 72.5 yards on the ground and 121.2 passing yards per game, both of which rank either first or second nationally. Beyond that, the Nittany Lions are also limiting the opposition to 8.0 points per game, also second in the country.

While most aspects of Penn State's defense has been dominant this season, it has mostly been due to the electric play of the Nittany Lions' defensive line. In the interior, the Nittany Lions are led by fifth-year nose tackle Hakeem Beamon and sophomore defensive tackle Zane Durant, with Durant boasting the most production with 11 tackles (4.5 for loss) and two sacks.

"I think we are bigger across the board," Franklin said. "Defensive end we're bigger, defensive tackle we're bigger. Part of that is the natural maturation process that happens. But I think they've done a good job of emphasizing it and putting the right kind of weight on. More importantly, they're playing in a way where they're so disruptive."

Coming off the outside are fifth-year senior Adisa Isaac, who already has 7.5 tackles for loss and five sacks, and junior Chop Robinson, who came on last year with 10 tackles for loss and 5.5 sacks. Bouying the pair are sophomore Dani Dennis-Sutton and junior Zuriah Fisher.

"Adisa is getting to the highest level that I've seen him play at since he's been in college," Diaz said.

“And then you have a guy like Dani Dennis-Sutton behind him doing the same thing.”

Penn State’s linebackers and secondary are no slouches, either, with a pair of returning starters in the middle with Abdul Carter and Curtis Jacobs as well as Karen King staking his claim in the secondary.

On offense, the Nittany Lions have received a boost from sophomore quarterback Drew Allar, along with the continued growth of running backs Nicholas Singleton and Kaytron Allen. That’s not to mention a veteran line that returns four starters and is helping the rushing attack to 203.3 yards per game.

It won’t be clear until Penn State at Ohio State kicks off whether or not the Nittany Lions have reached the level of knocking off the Buckeyes — that is as much a mental exercise as it is executing on the field — but through six games, it is clear that Penn State is at least on Ohio State’s level, with just as good a shot of winning the conference as the Buckeyes or Wolverines have through the season’s midway point .

“I think we’re pretty good,” defensive end Chop Robinson said. “We’re only chasing greatness, so we want to get better. We’re not satisfied with our performances. We’ve been playing pretty good, and we’re just building on it every week.”

PLAYERS TO WATCH:

- **QB Drew Allar:** A native Ohioan, Allar might be the most talented quarterback to start for the Nittany Lions in several years, throwing for 1,254 yards and 12 touchdowns without an interception through six games.
- **RBs Nicholas Singleton and Kaytron Allen:** Considering this is one of the best one-two punches at running back in the country, it seems fair to pair them up here. The sophomore duo has combined for 737 yards on 167 carries (4.4 per attempt) with nine touchdowns this season.
- **DE Adisa Isaac:** A menace to opposing offenses this season, Isaac has already accounted for 7.5 tackles for loss and five sacks through six games coming off the edge.
- **LB Curtis Jacobs:** Penn State’s leader on defense, Jacobs has far-and-away the most tackles for the unit with 23 and has added three tackles for loss, a sack and has recovered two fumbles.
- **CB Daquan Hardy:** While not a regular for Penn State’s secondary, Hardy has made his impact as a returner, taking two punts to the house in the Nittany Lions’ recent 63-0 win over UMass.

GAME INFO: Ohio Stadium, 12 p.m., FOX

After a brief foray into streaming, Ohio State will return to a linear broadcast against Penn State with the game set to be broadcast on FOX with a noon kickoff.

A top-10 matchup between the Buckeyes and Nittany Lions is also bringing in all sorts of attractions, with ESPN’s College GameDay and FOX’s Big Noon Kickoff both setting up on campus ahead of the game.

The Buckeyes are developing a bit of a reputation when Big Noon Kickoff is in town, boasting an 8-2 record when the show is in Columbus and a 12-3 record when the crew is at one of Ohio State’s games, regardless of location. As for GameDay, this will be the 58th time it has covered an Ohio State game, and the 23rd time that GameDay has come to Columbus.

SERIES HISTORY: This will be the 38th all-time meeting between Ohio State and Penn State, with the Buckeyes taking the most recent six games.

Penn State last won in the series in 2016 in State College, Pa., and has not won in Columbus since 2011. The Nittany Lions were also credited with a win in 2010 as a result of a vacated game by the Buckeyes.

But the series has been mostly one-sided since Franklin arrived in 2014, with Penn State's head coach just 1-8 against Ohio State and without a win in four tries at Ohio Stadium.

Date	Opponent	Location	Time/Result	TV/Streaming
Sept. 2	at Indiana	Bloomington, Ind.	W, 23-3	CBS
Sept. 9	Youngstown State	Columbus	W, 35-7	BTN
Sept. 16	Western Kentucky	Columbus	W, 63-10	FOX
Sept. 23	at Notre Dame	South Bend, Ind.	W, 17-14	NBC/Peacock
Oct. 7	Maryland	Columbus	W, 37-17	FOX
Oct. 14	at Purdue	West Lafayette, Ind.	W, 41-7	Peacock
Oct. 21	Penn State	Columbus	W, 20-12	FOX
Oct. 28	at Wisconsin	Madison, Wisc.	W, 24-10	NBC
Nov. 4	at Rutgers	Piscataway, N.J.	W, 35-16	CBS
Nov. 11	Michigan State	Columbus	W, 38-3	NBC/Peacock
Nov. 18	Minnesota	Columbus	W, 37-3	BTN
Nov. 25	at Michigan	Ann Arbor, Mich.	L, 30-24	FOX
Dec. 29	Cotton Bowl vs. Missouri	Arlington, Texas	L, 14-3	ESPN