

Alabama's Nick Saban, Ohio State's Ryan Day Preview College Football Playoff National Championship



Alabama head coach Nick Saban and Ohio State head coach Ryan Day met virtually with the media one final time before the two go head-to-head in Monday's College Football Playoff National Championship.

Here's a brief recap of what they had to say:

- Saban said they have a lot of respect for Ohio State and how Day runs the program. "We have a lot of respect and appreciation for Ohio State's team, what they've accomplished this year. They're very well-coached and a very good football team. We look forward to a great game."
- Day called Saban one of the greatest coaches in history of college football and that the Buckeyes are excited for the great challenge of playing the Crimson Tide.
- Day said this season has not gone the way they drew it up, but they're grateful for the chance to win a national title. "I think it goes to show you how strong our guys have been. Every program has gone through some different version of it. At some point we're going to sit back and go through all this stuff, but now is not the time."
- Day on the 2017 recruiting class: "Four Big Ten Championships and will go down probably as one of the more successful groups to ever come through."
- Saban said defensive back Malachi Moore is "very questionable" for the national championship game after missing the Rose Bowl win over Notre Dame with an unspecified injury, while defensive lineman LaBryan Ray is "more probable" since he's been able to practice this week.
- Asked if they have any superstitions on the coin toss, both coaches said they don't have any.
- Day said the goal is never to get to the national championship. It's to win it. "When you have your goals of beating your rival, of winning the conference, of winning the semifinal and then finally this game, you have to check off those boxes. But ultimately this is the final goal. That's what all the focus is on right now."
- Day did say that reaching this point is a point of pride, but "if you start to talk about those, think about those, focus on those, it's just a distraction towards playing in this game. I think regardless of what happens on Monday, you take the next couple weeks and reflect on the season. Now is not the time for that. Now it's all about playing in this game, playing well, because that's what matters."
- Saban on injured wide receiver Jaylen Waddle, who has been able to practice this week: "I think

the biggest challenge is can he sustain in the game? It'll be a game-time decision as to whether he thinks he can play and go out there and do his job well enough to contribute to the team. We won't know that until we get out there after pregame warmup.

- Day said the team understands what's at stake, but it's about executing at the end of the day. "The more you prepare, the more confident you can be on game day. So that's really what it comes down to. Certainly, there's going to be excitement and all those things with a big game, but once the foot hits the ball, it's another game and it comes down to doing your job. That's really all you do is you just continue to spend as much time as you can preparing for the game so you can play faster on Monday night."
- Day on Alabama's offensive firepower and the idea that the game might become a shootout: "You've got to take it one play at a time. You never know how games like this are going to play out. They certainly have great weapons on offense. The quarterback is tremendous. The offensive line is as good as I've seen, the running back. I mean, they're as talented an offense and play as clean as I've seen."
- Saban on offensive coordinator Steve Sarkisian, who was recently named Texas' head coach and will coach his final game with Alabama on Monday: "He has shown great maturity, I think, in how he's handled his situation, moving on to be a head coach, which is what he's worked for. We're happy for him relative to the opportunity that he's created for himself by the great job that he's done for us here."
- Day on quarterback Justin Fields, who suffered an undisclosed injury on a shot to the midsection in the Sugar Bowl: "Justin has had a good week of practice. He's done a really good job preparing, and I think that's the thing that he felt like he did a good job going into last game, was just preparing at a high level, and he's continued to do that this week."
- Saban on recruiting boost that comes with playing in and potentially winning the national championship: "I think our program is built to try to create value for players so that they can be more successful in life for having been involved in the program. And I think that the more success you have on the field, the more interest you create, whatever that circumstance is. Certainly playing in a game like this allows you to be sort of the center of attention for at least this week of the game and maybe beyond."
- Saban called Ohio State running back Trey Sermon a really good player. "I think he's an outstanding player and certainly going to be a challenge for us to try to at least do a decent job of not letting them be able to run the ball and create positive down and distance situations so that we're always on our heels on defense, which when you have great balance, that's always the fear you have for your defensive team."
- Day on Alabama running back Najee Harris: "He is playing at a high level this season. I think that a big part of it is the offensive line, the tight ends, how well they block. But he's running really hard. When you get him to the second level he can make guys miss in a variety of ways. I think he runs hard. He falls forward a lot. He's also done a good job in the pass game, in protection. He's caught balls as a receiver. He's caught balls coming out of the backfield, his check-downs. So he's a complete back. Very versatile."
- Day said he adjusts his scheme to the skillsets of the players in the program. "The art of coaching college football is adjusting your scheme to utilize the personnel that you have at that moment. We recruit the best players and then adjust our scheme. That's the coach's job, to put them in the best position to be successful."
- Saban on Alabama's eighth national championship appearance in the last 12 years: "It's hard to compare teams. You always want your team to have great togetherness and be positive in their work and what they try to do to accomplish the goals that they have, and people have to be responsible for their own self-determination so they can go out there and do their job at a high

level.”

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