

# Buckeye Sports Bulletin Quotebook: Ohio State, Alabama Discuss College Football Playoff National Championship



**Ohio State junior quarterback Justin Fields when asked how much losing senior tailback Trey Sermon to injury in the first quarter impacted what Ohio State wanted to do offensively:** "Of course Trey going out, of course he was hot these last few weeks, but we have the mentality of competitive excellence. And when one man goes down, we have to bring up the next man. But we would have liked to have Trey out there. He's a baller, he's a warrior, but he wasn't able to play with us. But with or without him, we've still got to execute."

**Ohio State junior wide receiver Chris Olave when asked what was in his head after having such high expectations and not having the offensive production the team wanted:** "It was tough. I mean, we have high standards for ourselves, high standards for each other. We worked so hard in all the season to get to this point. And we didn't play our best game today. It's tough. And it's a down moment. But we just have to soak it in and bounce back."

**Ohio State head coach Ryan Day on Fields playing through injury:** "Justin has been unbelievable. He's as competitively tough a player as I've been around. For him to go out there and play today really shows his toughness and how much he loves his brothers. He still took some shots on that hip. He was not 100 percent tonight. He was working through it and made some really good throws, made some gutsy plays, kept us in the game there for a while. He's an unbelievable player, and I'm going to miss him."

**Ohio State junior tight end Jeremy Ruckert on his relationship with Fields:** "Other than as a football player, you can tell just how much of a competitor he is and how truly great he is. He always puts us in a great position. And he's one of the toughest players I've ever been around. One of my toughest teammates I've ever seen. He showed that last game and coming back this game, behind the scenes, just 24/7 in our training room, getting his body right and doing everything he can to make sure

he's out here. And I feel he didn't even give it away that he was hurt at all. It looked like he was standing in there strong and doing whatever he could to help us win. He's a great person, an unbelievable football player and I'm excited to watch his future."

**Fields on what his two years at Ohio State meant to him:** "The last few years have been great. I've made a lot of friendships and made a lot of brothers. We definitely wanted a different outcome, but I'm definitely going to miss everybody."

**Fields on how the loss will motivate him in the offseason:** "It's going to motivate me a lot. We didn't get the turnout that we wanted to, didn't get the result that we wanted. But that's just going to make us work harder. This team deals with adversity very well. We've been through a lot of adversity this past year. We're just going to use it to get back and just work our butts off."

**Ohio State fifth-year senior defensive end Jonathon Cooper when asked about facing an offense like Alabama's and how the defense felt in practice with its preparation:** "A lot of credit to Alabama. They're a great team. We knew that coming in. They're coached very well, and they have good players. We felt like we did a good job preparing all week. There's not much I can say honestly. You guys saw the game. They're a good team. I feel like we didn't execute and didn't tackle as well as we should have, as a whole defense. We just had to be better. Unfortunately, we were not. They took advantage of that."

**Ohio State fourth-year junior cornerback Shaun Wade when asked if returning for the season was worth it for him despite the loss in the national championship:** "Oh, yeah, definitely it was worth it. I see myself growing as a man and as a team, and all the young guys growing as men, all the things that we went through, the adversity. I'm happy I came back, and I'm just glad we got here. I'm upset we didn't get the win, but I'm definitely happy I came back and accomplished some big things with this team. I'm proud of them. I'm proud of everybody."

**Wade on if he will return again or enter the NFL draft:** "I really can't say. You know, I do want to come back and everything. I have to talk to my parents. It is upsetting that we got here, and we just didn't accomplish the goal. And that's just been my goal, winning a national championship and just winning big games like this. I'll just go back with my parents, go talk to them and just go from there."

**Alabama senior wide receiver DeVonta Smith when asked what he thought about Wade wanting to cover him and how he felt the matchup went after his 12-catch, 215-yard, three-touchdown first half:** "Well, I mean, I just practiced hard all week, just worked, came to do my job. It just worked out well for me and the team."

**Alabama head coach Nick Saban when asked how tough it was to see Smith get hurt after the season he had:** "Well, he really dislocated his finger. I told Smitty after the game, I said, 'You're the only player that I know that missed a whole half because of your finger.' It was dislocated and they couldn't get it back in. If they'd have got it back in, he would have been fine. He actually wanted to play, we just didn't allow him to. He's a great competitor. I heard somebody say he set some kind of record in the first half of the game. Heavens knows what he would have done if he played the whole game. But you're talking about the ultimate warrior, ultimate competitor. I'm so happy for him that he was recognized as the best player in college football because I don't think anybody has done more for their team than he has for our team."

**Ohio State fifth-year senior linebacker Tuf Borland on his vantage point when Alabama's**

**Heisman Trophy-winning receiver in Smith beat him on a route for a touchdown:** “Just three deep down. We know one of the issues is protecting the seams, so it kind of just happened. He’s a Heisman Trophy winner, so give him credit. He’s a good player. So I’ll work to get it fixed.”

**Day on facing the offensive firepower of the Crimson Tide:** “They’re very good schematically, and they have really good personnel. And so, it’s one thing to have a good play, it’s another thing to execute it. We didn’t do that well enough on either side of the ball tonight.”

**Day when asked if he needs to change his defensive scheme for future matchups with teams that have the kind of talent that Alabama had on the national title stage:** “We did do some different things. We changed up some of the looks and played some two high, which is not something we typically do a lot of. We pressured some more the last couple games. So I thought we did mix it up a decent amount. But again, it’s another thing to actually execute it. When you’re playing against elite players, and this is probably one of the better offenses in college football in a long time, the margin for error is tiny. I think it’s probably more the execution. I thought at least in the first half we did a decent job against the run game, which was a huge emphasis point was we had to stop the run. And they’re very well-balanced, so that’s a challenge when you go against a team like this. But clearly, we didn’t hold up well enough in the pass game.”

**Fields when asked what his message was to the younger players whom he spoke to on the field following the loss:** “I was just telling the young guys that they have a lot more years left, and I was just telling them to remember what this feels like, never let it happen to them again. Of course, they were down. They have time left, so I encouraged them to get back to work as quickly as possible and just remember this feeling of walking off the field with a loss. I just told them to remember the feeling.”

**Alabama sophomore wide receiver John Metchie III on being a Canadian and playing on a big stage like the national championship:** “It feels great. I do it for all my people back home who continue to support me. I remember watching these national championship games when I was a kid in Canada and dreaming of playing in it. So being able to finally play in one and win one, as a matter of fact, is surreal. It’s something that’s kind of hard to put words to describe.”

**Smith on the toughness of junior wide receiver Jaylen Waddle to play through injury:** “It just shows the commitment, how much he loves his team. Him just wanting to be out there, just doing what he can, give us everything he’s got. That was just the message. Give us what you got, we’ll take anything.”

**Alabama fourth-year junior quarterback Mac Jones when asked if Nick Saban is the greatest college football coach of all time:** “C’mon, man. Of course, he is. How could he not be? He does it the right way. He recruits well, but more importantly develops great players and young men. I’m just so blessed that he gave me a chance to come here along with all my teammates. I wouldn’t trade it for anything. He’s the greatest to ever do it. He’ll be the greatest for a long time.”

**Alabama senior tailback Najee Harris when asked how he was able to expose holes in Ohio State’s really good front so effortlessly:** “Effortlessly? You didn’t see what they were doing? They were blowing my ass up. What are you talking about? It wasn’t effortlessly. I’ll tell you what. They did their thing, to be honest with you. It was just, you know, what they did is every time we did a play-action, they just shot the gaps. The linebackers, we had a couple of them to play a lot of fakes. That’s why we were able to throw so many bubbles and slants and all that. But bro, they were blowing my ass out. You’re tripping. It was not easy. I am hurting.”