

Buckeyes Confident Kyle McCord Can Lead Team To Victory In Primetime Against Notre Dame



In Ohio State's Week 1 matchup against Notre Dame last season, then-sophomore quarterback Kyle McCord was anchored on the Buckeyes' sideline, watching future Heisman Trophy finalist and No. 2 overall NFL Draft selection C.J. Stroud throw for an efficient 223 yards and two touchdowns en route to a 21-10 top-five victory over the Fighting Irish.

This year, the now-third-year McCord finds himself at the center of this historic matchup, as he is tasked with leading his offense into Notre Dame Stadium on Saturday night as the Buckeyes' unquestioned starting quarterback. Despite the tall task of a first-year starter navigating his team to victory in a primetime matchup between two top-10 teams, those who share the field with McCord believe he possesses the tools to meet this early-season challenge.

"I think there's no doubt about it, I think he's ready for the moment," tight end Cade Stover said on Wednesday. "I think he's an all-around good person, all-around good guy to play for and play with. You want to call it poise, you want to call it composure, yeah, I think he has all of the above."

McCord, who completed 19 of his 23 pass attempts for 318 yards and three touchdowns in his first game as a full-time starter last weekend against Western Kentucky, was praised by his teammates at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center on Wednesday for the veteran-like maturity and poise he has displayed this season under center, something that can bode well for the team as they take the field Saturday night. Despite the matchup with the Fighting Irish being McCord's first true road test, his teammates, especially McCord's former high school teammate and current All-American wideout Marvin Harrison Jr., believe he is more than capable of shining under the bright lights of historic Notre Dame Stadium.

"I mean, obviously he knows the magnitude of this game," Harrison said. "But he's very calm and

collected. He's not going to let the pressure get to him. He prepares harder than anyone else. He definitely is coming to be mentally prepared, and obviously he has the ability. So he just has to go out there and trust himself."

For Harrison, this is a trait that he has seen in McCord since they were young high schoolers at Philadelphia's St. Joseph's Prep. The former Hawks wideout points back to a game during their sophomore year when they faced off against Baltimore (Md.) St. Frances Academy, which was ranked in the top-five nationally at the time, as a moment where he first realized McCord's unflappable mental toughness.

"It was our very first game, and he's a sophomore starting," Harrison said. "They were probably ranked one of the top-five teams in the country at the time, so it's no different now. I just realized that he came out there with poise, and he trusted in himself to make the plays."

Fast forward five years, and McCord is continuing to show the same type of level-headedness on the field. Stover believes these qualities — along with his quarterback's newfound aggression and intensity — can come to light against the Fighting Irish, setting the tone for the team as they attempt to bring a significant road victory back to Columbus.

"He's done a really good job," Stover said. "I mean, like anybody in the world, once you know that 'Hey, you're our guy,' just naturally you become more of a leader, just like that. I think last week was really good for him, really good for the team. I think he's starting to hit his stride at the right time, and hopefully we're starting to hit ours."