

# Secondary Preparing For Heavy Passing Attack Against Western Kentucky



In two games, the Ohio State defense has seen 47 passes thrown against them. In those two weeks, their next opponent, Western Kentucky, has thrown 88 passes, completing 61 of them for 654 yards. Their passing attack is the center of their offense and has been with redshirt senior Austin Reed at quarterback, who led the nation last season with 4,744 passing yards.

Secondary coach Tim Walton thinks the defense is prepared for the challenge Reed presents.

“We’re going to challenge all throws,” he said. “If a quarterback is going to try to thread the ball, he’s going to trust his arm strength, he’s going to make those throws. We have to be attacking the ball at all times, and with that hopefully we get some turnovers.”

With Reed throwing the ball, Hilltoppers junior wide receiver Malachi Corley finished the 2022 season fourth in the country with 1,293 receiving yards. He didn’t play in last week’s game against Houston Christian, but he’s expected to be back for Week 3. Walton said the Buckeyes are going to have to make sure they don’t lose track of him during the game, especially because he is so good with the ball after making a catch.

“We have to make sure we’re tackling well,” he said. “He’s good after the catch so we have to make sure we’re driving on the ball, and we’re wrap-tackling with him. He’s a big guy - 210 pounds - and they move him around. He’ll be in different locations, so we have to know where he’s located... We have to make sure we’re contesting all of the throws. We know they’re going to try to get him the ball.”

He feels the secondary has been good about making tackles in the open field so far this season and said they will need to continue with that since the Hilltoppers like to spread their offense out and move quickly.

Reed will get the ball to his other receivers in the spread offense as well. Easton Messer has 11 catches

for 134 yards, Dalvin Smith has nine for 107, and former Buckeye Blue Smith has caught eight passes for 88 yards. Eight players on the team have five or more receptions compared to Ohio State's four.

"They spread out. They give you every look that's imaginable," Walton said. "They push the ball down the field vertically, they're a tempo team. The quarterback does a good job of looking guys off... They'll run four or five wideouts at times. They do enough to keep you honest."

Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles doesn't want his defense to get comfortable after they have performed well against the pass in the first two games. They haven't seen a pass attack like the Hilltoppers yet.

"I think it's a big test. I really do," he said. "This is an offense that will attack on the perimeter and downfield. We had some issues with that last year. We've gotten better in our first couple games in terms of explosive plays and minimizing that but we haven't really been tested yet. So, this will be important"