

Buckeyes Still See Room For Improvement After Thrilling Victory Against Notre Dame



There was a feeling of pure euphoria emanating through the Ohio State's locker room following the team's thrilling 17-14 victory against Notre Dame, a rush that continued during the postgame press conference, mostly with head coach Ryan Day's harsh criticism of former Irish head coach Lou Holtz.

That excitement has since gone away in the days following the top-10 road victory, however, with the Buckeyes now turning the page and looking ahead to their next challenge on Oct. 7.

"I celebrated that night and I was excited," wide receiver Emeka Egbuka said Wednesday. "But we're not anywhere near where we need to be. That win doesn't really mean anything if we lose to Maryland."

"It was an amazing event," linebacker Cody Simon added. "But now everybody's going to watch that film and we know that we have to get back on our grind. It's all about how we can follow up with that game. Like Coach Day said, (the Notre Dame game) doesn't matter. This game could be so great, but unless we back it up week after week after week, it won't mean anything. So we have to keep pressing and keep getting better every week."

Speaking in front of the media for the first time since the last-second victory over the Irish, Egbuka admitted that this team, and especially the offense, is still far from where they want to be. He mentioned a lack of execution as one of the bigger areas the unit needs to improve upon the most, citing penalties and missed opportunities as specific things that have prevented them from stringing together consistent drives.

"We need to stay on schedule when it comes to plays," Egbuka said. "(We need to) limit negative plays and penalties because of the new rule of the clock. If you look at all the teams that we played this year, they've kind of gone to the ground-and-pound approach, trying to keep the ball out of our hands. We had eight possessions that whole entire Notre Dame game, and then seven possessions in the first half of Georgia. So every play we have out there means more because we have less plays. So we can't get off schedule with any type of play. We have to stay on pace."

While Egbuka said his offense needs to improve upon their overall productivity, Simon mentioned that his defensive unit must focus on the fundamentals if they want to reach their full potential before they begin Big Ten play in October. This, according to the linebacker, should serve as a primary point of

emphasis for the defense during the bye week as they prepare for Big Ten play.

“The amazing thing about football is it’s really all about fundamentals,” Simon said. It’s all about the basics. That’s the main focus of bye weeks, is getting back to being violent with your hands,, footwork, communication, everything’s all simple. That’s the thing about these big moments in games. You think it’s miraculous plays, but it’s really just the basics and who can do their basics better than the other team.”

No matter what changes need to be made between the bye week and the Oct. 7 matchup against Maryland, Simon said his team will continue to embark on this 2023 season as a collective unit — one that ignores the outside noise and adheres to the “Ohio against the world” philosophy.

“We know that we’re going to get the best out of anybody,” Simon said. “And it’s not that everybody is against us, but we are together. And when we’re together, no one can beat us besides ourselves. And so we always just try to stay together as a unit.”