

Cody Simon Says Defense Was Prepared For Fourth-And-1 Stops



After Ohio State's first drive where they had to punt, Notre Dame was marching down the field, controlling the game and possession time. They took a slow drive all the way down to the Buckeyes 18-yard line and could have put the first points on the board by kicking a field goal but decided to go for it on fourth-and-1.

On that play, Sam Hartman dropped back to pass, looking for the tight end, Mitchell Evans, who was his No. 1 target for the day. Buckeyes' linebacker Cody Simon didn't let Evans have even an inch of space and pressure from the defensive line forced Hartman to roll out to the right where Simon was, looking to run for the first down. Simon stayed on Evans up until he realized Hartman wasn't going to pass, then chased Hartman down stopping him right at the line to reach.

After the play was initially called a first down, it was reviewed and ruled that he was stopped short for a turnover on downs with Hartman holding the ball on his back shoulder only inches short of where it needed to get to, keeping the game scoreless. Simon credits this play to all of the intense preparation Ohio State does at practice.

"I always prepare like I could be the guy to take every snap, so you have to be ready to do what it takes," Simon said. "And our coaches do a really good job of making sure we covered as much as we can, all the possible situations, and we knew kind of what we thought was going to happen. I just wanted to play my job and it worked out."

Simon said it's always the goal for the defense to get off the field with no points on the board and change the momentum of the game. He wasn't sure how close Hartman was to a first down, but he knew he was the one that needed to go make the stop.

"At that point I just felt like the time was going too far and I had to make him make a decision," he said. "It's a rare play that happens - fourth-and-1 middle of the field of play - and I just felt like I had to make that play."

It wasn't the only time the defense stopped Hartman on a fourth-and-1 run either. On their first drive in the third quarter, the Fighting Irish made it down to Ohio State's 39-yard line, out of field goal range,

and needed 1 yard to keep their offense on the field. This time they went with a designed Hartman that was stuffed by safeties Sonny Styles Lathan Ransom.

The Buckeyes defense was prepared for the game against a high-powered offense, and they only allowed 14 points the entire game. Both of those turnovers on downs very likely could have ended in points for Notre Dame and helped them come away with a 17-14 win.