

Column: Day's Job Should Be Very Secure



For anyone that's been living under a rock for at least the past weekend, Ohio State lost to Michigan for the third straight year, this time by a score of 30-24. Despite an 11-1 record, the sky is falling to many fans who believe the game against Michigan is the most important one of the season.

In his tenure as head coach of the Buckeyes, Ryan Day has a 1-3 record against the Wolverines which is causing painful flashbacks to the John Cooper era, who is known mostly for his 2-10-1 record against them. This is bringing on calls for the firing of Day, which are even louder than they were after the 2022 loss, and if this trend continues, they will only be amplified even more.

The worry is Day doesn't respect the rivalry the same way Cooper didn't. Cooper believed the rivalry game was a big game, but it was just another big game, not The Game. But Day is clear that he understands what the rivalry means, and as the losses continue, it is only going to mean more to him to beat Michigan in the years going forward.

"I was taught that the way you respect the rivalry is to work it every day," Day said Nov. 21, "whether it's in the weight room, whether it's game planning, talking to your players, periods of practice during the spring, periods of practice in the preseason. We do respect the rivalry."

It's not as if he is completely incapable of winning The Game. He also won his first game in 2019 against them, and had the game in 2020 not been canceled, the Buckeyes might have actually put up 70 points on the Wolverines that year with how each of their seasons were going.

When 2021 came around, Michigan was a much better football team. How much of that is because of the sign stealing fiasco that was going on in Ann Arbor is up for debate, but it's undeniable that the product on the field was a good one regardless of how they got there.

Now in 2023, with the sign stealing past them, this current Wolverine squad might be a better version than Urban Meyer ever saw in his tenure in Columbus. To lose by a touchdown in the final minute when the starting quarterback threw two interceptions is not the end of the world, no matter how much fans hate losing to their rivals. Not that the loss was all on Kyle McCord, but it also can't be put squarely on Day's shoulders.

He has also shown the ability as a head coach to adapt and change his team which he did specifically for the Michigan game this season. Last year they were beat by explosive plays, and the whole defensive philosophy was to prevent explosive plays. They were much more successful with that, but it still wasn't enough. When he and the rest of his staff dive into the film, if changes need to be made, they will make them.

Outside of the Michigan game, Day has a 55-4 record at Ohio State as the head coach. Of those other four losses, three were in the College Football Playoff, and the other was to a ranked Oregon team 35-28 on Sept. 11, 2021. Day has never lost to another Big Ten team (40-0), and he has never lost a small game. His overall winning percentage is 88.9 percent which is behind only Urban Meyer (90.2 percent) out of all Ohio State coaches that were at the helm for five or more years.

Day has been one of the best coaches in college football in terms of recruiting, and in terms of winning. With the College Football Playoff moving to 12 teams next season, if the Buckeyes are as good as they have been every year since he took over, they will almost certainly be a lock to have a chance to win it all. In each of the past five years, they would have been in if 12 teams made it. The rivalry is also no longer a deciding factor in who can get a chance to win the national championship.

Whether that is a good thing for college football or the rivalry is a very different conversation, but the playoffs are expanding regardless, and the last game of the season will be the national championship, making it the most important one in the eyes of most college football fans.

Every single Day-led team has been good enough to compete for a national championship, and that is something he will continue to build at Ohio State. Teams that can compete for national championships can compete with Michigan. It will be at least another calendar year before they get another chance to, but those wins are coming.