

Day, Buckeyes Look To Make Most Of Second Opportunity In CFP



In the days following Ohio State's deflating 45-23 loss at the hands of Michigan at Ohio Stadium on Nov. 26, there was a sinking feeling in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

On the surface, it appeared that the Buckeyes' season had been derailed. Ohio State's loss to Michigan had crossed off two of its three ultimate goals entering this campaign: beat the Wolverines, win the Big Ten Championship and win the College Football Playoff National Championship. However, Utah's upset of USC in the Pac-12 Championship lifted Ohio State back into the playoff picture, salvaging the Buckeyes' pursuit for a national title.

As Ohio State saw themselves land into the No. 4 seed in the CFP, head coach Ryan Day said the attitude in the WHAC flipped almost immediately.

"Today, there was so much energy in the Woody. You could feel it when you walked in," Day said on Sunday. "When we saw our name come up, it was just a shot of adrenaline in the whole building.

"It's a new season and you learn from the past," he continued. "Now it's just a matter of what we do moving forward."

Although the bitter feeling of losing to Michigan remained, Day and the Buckeyes experienced new-found hope when they were placed in the CFP by the committee.

However, it wasn't a moment Ohio State was unprepared for as OSU held a pair of practices on Wednesday and Thursday with the mindset that they would be playing for the national title.

"It takes a couple of days to get there and figure out what's next," Day said. "Monday and Tuesday, you get the guys together and say, 'OK, what's the plan for this week?' We had to identify what went wrong but then 'OK, what are we doing moving forward.'

"That's why we decided to have the team meeting and practice on Wednesday and then on Thursday to get out there and say 'Guys, we're playing in a game here, in the CFP,' he continued. "Once you get into a whole week of doing nothing, you can kind of get into that offseason mode and you get a little lazy, a little sloppy and we didn't do that.

“We kept our body weights up, we got back on the field, got to work with no guarantee of anything. But, the guys went out there and had a really good practice on Thursday and said ‘if we make this thing, we know we have this in our back pocket’ and kept our edge.”

While Day noted that the Buckeyes are excited to find themselves back in the mix, with a battle against No. 1 Georgia in the Peach Bowl on the horizon, he emphasized that this newfound opportunity in the CFP will be for naught if Ohio State can’t capitalize on it.

“It’s an opportunity that you weren’t guaranteed and now you have it, so what are we going to do with it?” Day said. “Certainly, a lot of people counted us out, but here we are. I kind of like being in this (underdog) role, but now we have to go do something with it. It doesn’t mean anything if we don’t do anything. Just being upset or having a second opportunity is not going to mean anything if we don’t do anything with it.

“But, what an unbelievable chance to go do something special.”