

Day Discusses Run-Game Deficiencies



It's no secret Ohio State has not run the ball well the past two weeks.

The Buckeyes in fact averaged just 2.2 yards per carry against Iowa Oct. 22 and 3.8 yards against Penn State Oct. 29, an average that dips to 2.3 if you exclude second-year running back TreVeyon Henderson's 41-yard touchdown jaunt in the fourth quarter. This after they averaged 6.0 yards and 5.2 yards per carry against Wisconsin and Michigan State, respectively.

If OSU wants to stay ahead of the chains and maintain offensive balance, it will require better production from its rushing attack going forward.

"I think when you look at each of (the teams we've played), they're a little bit different," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said. "Each team that we play has a different style up front. There were certainly some runs that we could have blocked better, there were some runs that were blocked very well. So we've just got to continue to work at it and swing at it and get more efficient at it."

Outside running concepts have been of particular difficulty the past two weeks, Day noted.

Henderson's above-mentioned long scoring run came straight up the middle of the Nittany Lions' defense. Meanwhile, an earlier third-and-1 handoff to an outside zone was stuffed when Penn State defensive tackle Coziah Izzard blew up Ohio State offensive guard Matthew Jones and took Henderson down behind the line of scrimmage.

That's just one example, but it's indicative of how a variety of wider concepts have turned out for the Buckeyes on the ground of late. The holes Henderson and third-year running back Miyan Williams were finding off-tackle against Wisconsin, when both rushed for 100 yards, either haven't been there or aren't being found.

"There's nothing in there that's just glaring," Day said. "Like, 'Oh my God, we can't run the ball outside' or 'We can't block these guys' or 'We can't read the hole.' It sounds kind of like loser talk but it's true — it was kind of one guy on each play. But that's how it works in football."

Day did state that the problems don't stem from any formational tendencies Ohio State exhibits, though. Against Penn State, every single time the Buckeyes went under center or out of the pistol, they ran the football. When presented with that data point, Day pointed out that four of the five runs out of pistol were "efficient."

"We were efficient 80 percent of the time in pistol runs," Day said. "So I think the question probably is, 'Why don't we run the ball more out of pistol?'"

Given how the Buckeyes have throw the ball — third-year quarterback C.J. Stroud averages 10.7 yards per pass attempt this season — if they can get the ground game working again, it will be that much tougher to stop the nation's No. 2 scoring and No. 6 total offense.

"We can clean it up, and we have to clean it up to get more efficient early in a game, because that's when it's at its hardest," Day said. "Especially the first first down. That's always the hardest. Once we get going, we usually do O.K. Too many three-and-outs, and we could have done a better job early in the game (against Penn State). I thought we got some really good movement late in the game."