

Day, Harrison Lament Defensive Performance In Peach Bowl



For the second consecutive game, Ohio State allowed more than 500 yards of total offense and 40 points while getting gashed by explosive plays en route to another heartbreaking College Football Playoff loss to Georgia in the Peach Bowl.

As the Bulldogs racked up 533 yards, keyed by 15 plays that resulted in 15 or more yards, head coach Ryan Day said he was proud of his defense's effort but the unit's penchant for giving up explosive plays is what buried the Buckeyes in the end.

"It's a team loss, and I thought the defense played gritty at times," Day said. "All we were talking about was just swinging as hard as we can. We did give up some explosive plays again. We did. And it was something that we spent a lot of time talking about, avoiding the big play. I think the difference was, in this game, it didn't demoralize us in this game. We kept swinging and fighting, and we just kept going at it.

"But call it for what it is. If we're going to win these games, we can't give up those big explosive plays. They're hard to come back from, but there were still a lot of positive things out there."

Despite holding a 38-24 lead entering the fourth quarter, the Buckeye defense allowed the Bulldogs to churn out 187 yards in the final frame, while quarterback Stetson Bennett threw 190 of his 398 yards in the stanza. Georgia scored on a 76-yard touchdown pass from Bennett to wideout Arian Smith with 8:41 to play, cutting Ohio State's lead to 38-35 after converting the ensuing two-point conversion.

On the Bulldogs' game-winning drive, Bennett completed passes of 15 and 35 yards to set up the go-ahead 10-yard touchdown strike to Adonai Mitchell with 54 seconds remaining.

Although Ohio State's defense struggled to keep Georgia at bay — allowing Bennett to throw for a career-high 398 yards and three touchdowns — defensive end Zach Harrison noted that the Buckeyes left everything on the field in the loss.

“We can’t let up 42 points in a game like that, especially with the offense playing the way it is, but the plan was to go out there and let it all out, and we definitely did that,” Harrison said. “You can’t say we didn’t play hard. There are definitely some plays we definitely could have back, could have executed better on, could have made tackles, and been in a better position. But we played hard, and I’m proud of my guys, and I love my guys for doing that.”