

Film Study: Elite Blocking Springs Dobbins, Teague Against Indiana

For the third straight week, Ohio State impressed in a winning effort, and did it with a brand new gameplan. After passing down the field in week one against Florida Atlantic, and playing horizontally and setting up big runs in week two versus Cincinnati, the Buckeyes gashed Indiana on Sept. 14th with a power running style that had yet to surface through the first two games.

That power running game, led by 193 yards on 22 carries from JK Dobbins and 106 yards on 10 carries by backup Master Teague, came together seemingly out of nowhere. Ohio State's offensive line was decent against FAU, good-but-not-great against Cincinnati, and suddenly, against a decent Indiana defensive line, completely dominant. The Buckeyes were resetting the line of scrimmage by three or four yards on basically every single run.

While that kind of dominance obviously helps every facet of an offense, nowhere was its impact more apparent than in the power running game.

It showed up all game long, but the dominance up front really started as soon as Ohio State first touched the ball. The first drive, despite a missed field goal to cap it, showcased exactly how good the Buckeye line can be in 2019.

This is the first run of the game, and it was pretty emblematic of what Ohio State did to Indiana all day long. There actually isn't a huge push here, but that's by design, because the Buckeyes want the backside of the defense to collapse in on the wrong side of the play. With Luke Farrell in motion, blocking down to the right, Indiana does just what Ohio State wanted. That allows Jonah Jackson to leak out to the outside, and with just one defender out there, JK Dobbins just has to lead the defender into the free Jackson to create a hole, and run for an easy nine-yard gain.

On the very next play, Ohio State's line does it again, this time exerting its will as well as a line possibly can.

The entire line gets about a three yard push here. On a short yardage situation, there's no better outcome for a line, and it creates enough space that JK Dobbins could have essentially walked for a first down. It isn't a big gain, and it doesn't show up as super impressive on the box score, but this is the difference between last season's line and this season's. There was no push on short runs last season, no dominance. This year, so far, JK Dobbins has had all sorts of room to work when he only needs a few feet to move the chains, and that makes a massive difference.

While plenty should be made of the offensive line's spectacular game, it's reductive to give them all of the credit for Ohio State's rushing attack on Saturday. JK Dobbins benefitted from big running lanes, but he also had plays like this first quarter run, that came to be because of his own power, quickness and vision.

The line does a good job here, but the focus should be on Dobbins. He explodes through the gap, accelerates through two defenders, bounces outside, stiff arms a third, and fights all the way down to the goal line. If Ohio State can combine that kind of aggressive running with great line play all season, it could have one of the best rushing attacks in the country. That's hard to believe, given where the line was last season.

Just as some of the success has to be chalked up to JK Dobbins and Master Teague, there is credit to be given to Ryan Day and Justin Fields as well. Fields' ability as a runner serves as a constant threat that defenses have to consider, and in play design, Day has factored that fear into essentially every play. That fear manifested on Ohio State's first touchdown.

The defense can't possibly answer this. Because the line and Dobbins had been so dominant on this drive, the defense is biting hard on stopping the inside run, not even really factoring Fields in. Day knows this is coming, calls a zone read, and Fields makes the easy decision to keep the ball. With just a little help from Jeremy Ruckert, who pulls across off of a motion, Fields can dance into the end zone untouched.

Early in the second quarter, Ohio State finds itself in another short yardage situation, and again finds success because of a good early push, and a little help from a tight end, this time Rashod Berry.

Master Teague's speed is helpful here, but the line does an excellent job of absorbing Indiana's pressure, preventing any penetration, and providing enough cover for Teague to get to the corner. Once he's at the corner, all Ohio State needs is for Rashod Berry to win a one on one matchup, which he does easily. That much space is easy money for Master Teague, who seems to be the fastest player on the field.

While most line play can and should be discussed in the terms of a group, because all five linemen have to be good for a group to succeed. However, there are individual efforts from linemen that can stand out and make plays at times, and Ohio State had two such plays on two massive JK Dobbins runs in the second quarter.

The first of the two comes on this 56-yarder. The blocking is good enough to get Dobbins into the second level, but this run absolutely can't happen if Jonah Jackson doesn't slip into the second level, and completely neutralize a surging safety. Jackson puts himself between the defender and Dobbins, catches him at nearly full speed, and immediately plants him in the ground. That's a tremendously difficult play, and Jonah Jackson did it with ease.

The second comes from the other guard, Wyatt Davis, on Dobbins' 26-yard touchdown run a few minutes later. This plays starts with solid play design, drawing the defense out a bit on the fake screen, and solid blocking that gets Dobbins past the initial line, but it is made by Davis and eventually, Dobbins. Davis leaks out as Jackson did, identifies a linebacker, and completely takes both the linebacker and a safety out of the play. That creates just enough of a hole for Dobbins to slip through, and from there, the junior back is able to use his strength and balance to find the end zone.

The last sequence really worth talking about, before the game got completely out of hand, is Master

Teague's first full drive in the third quarter. With Dobbins essentially done for the day, Ohio State brought Teague in to showcase his speed and power, and thanks to more excellent line play, he did just that, flashing his skill on three chunk plays, including his 40-yard touchdown run.

The first of the three happened because the backside of the line was able to seal off their assignments extremely well, allowing Teague to cutback into a big hole, even when his first hole read on the playside was cluttered up. The blocking here isn't perfect, especially not on the playside, but it's good enough that Teague is able to make a play, and for him, that's all Ohio State really needs. He just needs space.

The second run had much better blocking. Teague has about three massive lanes to run through because every single lineman does his job well. Nicholas Petit-Frere and Jonah Jackson are the stars here, because they both seal off their assignments perfectly to create the hole Teague runs through, but Josh Myers deserves some recognition too. He gets to the second level as fast as he can, and picks up a linebacker, turning what would have been a five-gain into an easy first down for Teague.

The last play is obviously the best of the bunch, because Master Teague was able to break through for a massive touchdown run. The left tackle, center, right guard and right tackle are all washing down, away from the play side, to add to the illusion of Teague's counter fake to start the play. The defense bites, just as Ohio State hopes, which creates exactly the matchup the Buckeye were looking for.

Jeremy Ruckert and Wyatt Davis both pull to the play side to blow open a lane for Teague. Davis is responsible for the unblocked defensive end, and picks him up perfectly, which means that the only player left is the linebacker, who Ruckert kicks out easily. This is designed to be a touchdown if Ohio State runs it well, and Ohio State ran it perfectly here. All Teague has to do is use his speed to beat the safety, which he does. Six points on the board, and a perfect cap to essentially a perfect day on the ground.

The fact that Ohio State's line was able to be this dominant, all day long, with two different running backs and several new players rotating in late in the game indicates a few things. Firstly, it indicates that the line unit is feeling the pressure that was being put on Greg Studrawa. This unit is playing like one that knows it has to fight for its coach, and the guys up front are mauling defenses right now because of that. They look mean, and they look angry.

Secondly, Ohio State is not just a passing team. When the opportunity is there, Ryan Day can and will kill opponents on the ground, and it certainly seems like the opportunity is going to be there more often than not in 2019.

Lastly, the Buckeyes are really starting to develop an identity, both as a team and as a staff. Through three games, Ohio State has been more physical, more athletic, and more prepared than each opponent. The Buckeyes had the athleticism last season, but at times, the other two features were missing. This looks like a football team that has the athletic ability to run just about anybody off the field. That isn't new.

What is new, is those athletes looking more and more aware of what they are expected to do. The Buckeyes look well coached, and much more ready for what opponents are throwing at them. That kind of awareness and preparedness allows for a level of meanness, and a level of speed that can't exist for a

team that isn't prepared. The Buckeyes are confident, and right now, they're flying around. With Big Ten play on the horizon after a matchup with Miami (OH), the Buckeyes look like an obvious front runner, and right now, it doesn't look like anyone can keep up.