

McCord's Toughness Amid Struggles A Positive Sign For Ryan Day, Buckeyes



Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord has endured its fair share of ups and downs during his first season as the full-time starter, and there may not have been a bigger “down” than his underwhelming performance in the Buckeyes’ 24-10 victory over Wisconsin on Saturday night.

McCord struggled to find his rhythm under the lights against the Luke Fickell-led Badgers defense, missing on a number of routine throws and failing to show much awareness in the pocket. He also was banged up on a first-half rush, which forced him to play with a limp for the rest of the game. These faults would prove detrimental on the stat sheet, where he threw for two interceptions — by far the most in a game this season — and recorded one fumble, while also earning two costly intentional grounding penalties.

Amidst these struggles, however, the junior would show some signs of bouncing back. He accounted for two touchdowns on the night, both of which went to superstar wideout Marvin Harrison Jr., with the last one occurring in the third quarter to break a 10-10 tie. McCord’s overall performance, 17-26 for 226 passing yards, two touchdowns and two interceptions, was not pretty, but head coach Ryan Day said his quarterback showed a toughness and resiliency in Madison, Wisc. that his team will need moving forward.

“We’ll get him an evaluation (for his injury), but he’ll be fine,” Day said after the game. “I don’t think that those things are in his way right now, but I thought he toughed it out at the end, he still hung in there. When you have a couple of tough plays, what most people do is they start to get gun shy. He didn’t do that. He kept swinging, he kept pushing, you can hear him on the sideline. Right before that last drive when TreVeyon ran to make it a two-score game, he was in that huddle getting after the guys, and he showed good leadership there. I thought that was a positive.”

Day was critical of McCord’s mistakes after the game, saying that his first interception in the first half was a “bad decision.” But he did not fault the junior for his second pick, saying that it was simply a

showing of him being aggressive. McCord's second interception occurred in the second quarter when he attempted to find Harrison on a crossing route, only to deliver an inaccurate throw that went behind the wideout and into the arms of Badgers corner Ricardo Hallman.

"The second one, the corner came off on cover three," Day said. "He's reading the flat defender on cover three, and that corner just came right off him. He took a chance and he made a nice play. I don't really blame him for that play, I don't. There's going to be times where you push it down the field, things like that are going to happen. I told him, 'Hey, I get it. The corner came off. Let's just play the next play. Those plays are behind us.'

While McCord's mistakes did not prove costly against an inferior Badgers team, it could come back to bite him while facing off against tougher opponents down the stretch, most notably when facing off against arch-rival Michigan on Nov. 29. But those around him in the locker room feel he is still the best man to lead the team day in and day out, as he displays a toughness on the field that separates him from the pack.

"He's a resilient guy. He's a leader of our team, as well, so we look to him to lead us, especially on the road in a tough environment like it was tonight. He did that, whether he was 100 percent or going through some tough times. He never dropped his head. He has some good guys around him to lift him up. But that's the kind of guy he is and that's the kind of leader you need for a team like this."