

Notre Dame Highlighting Physicality Ahead Of Season Opener Against Ohio State



Although No. 2 Ohio State boasts one of the most dangerous passing attacks in the country, No. 5 Notre Dame's head coach Marcus Freeman has placed his attention on dominating the trenches.

With attention to the Buckeyes' offense — which led the country in yards (561.2) and points (45.7) per game in 2021 — Freeman placed an emphasis on slowing the Ohio State running game as the key to throwing it off track.

"If you don't stop the run, they're going to run it all day long. The ability to stop the run is most important," Freeman said on Monday. "We know they're very talented at throwing the ball, but it's the mindset. If you can't stop the run, they can throw it, they can run it, they can do whatever they want to do. We have to be able to stop the run."

The Fighting Irish were fair against the run last season, holding opposing offenses to 135.5 yards on the ground per game. In the lone game Freeman served as head coach — a 37-35 Fiesta Bowl loss against Oklahoma State — Notre Dame allowed the Cowboys to rush for 234 yards, including 125 yards from quarterback Spencer Sanders.

While Freeman has emphasized the importance of physicality within his program since taking over for Brian Kelly, he is also taking inspiration from the teams that beat the Buckeyes last season.

"There's certain games where they didn't have as much success offensively, but they won or maybe they didn't win," Freeman said. "I look at the Oregon game and Oregon, offensively, was able to run the ball and do some different things. I know we're facing a different defense, but it's still the ability to establish a run game offensively."

"You look at the Michigan game, and again, it was the ability for Michigan to run the ball," he continued. "The ability to run the ball, the ability to establish a run game to open up different areas in the pass game, to me, is really important."

Although Oregon and Michigan followed similar blueprints to take down the Buckeyes, Freeman said the Irish will need to add their own flair in order to come out of Ohio Stadium with a win on Saturday.

"There isn't a common thing. You look at some of the games they've lost in the past couple of years and

offensively you have to be able to take control of the game,” Freeman said. “We have to hold onto the football and establish long drives. That’s going to be something we have to do if we want a chance to win this game. You have to limit their offensive possessions.”