

Offense Rolling in Red Zone



No team in college football has been more efficient in the red zone than Ohio State this season.

In 29 trips inside the opposing 20-yard line, the Buckeyes' offense hasn't failed to score a single time. They've pushed through to the end zone 27 of those 29 occasions, a national-best rate of 93.1 percent.

One year after finishing a middling 45th in red zone touchdown percentage, the Buckeyes' prolific offense has shown thus far in 2022 that it can finish the long drive it creates.

"I think we've had good balance," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said. "We've been able to run the football down there when we've needed to, but also we've thrown the ball well. And that's going to be important as we head into the second half of the season."

Day's not kidding about that balance. Of the 27 red zone touchdowns, 14 have come through the air and 13 have come on the ground.

Third-year running back Miyan Williams is Ohio State's red zone scoring leader, piling up seven touchdown runs from inside the 20-yard line as part of his team-high eight total rushing scores. Second-year running back TreVeyon Henderson has added three red zone scoring jaunts of his own.

With its average of 6.0 yards per carry, fifth-best in the nation, OSU can stay ahead of the chains and keep defenses guessing, according to offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson.

"When you can run the ball and stay a little more on schedule, you don't get third-and-8 and third-and-9 in spaces where the field gets condensed and the zones get tighter and they can be a little more aggressive in blitzing," Wilson said.

Of course, it also helps to have talented and big-bodied wide receivers. Second-year wideout Marvin Harrison Jr. stands at 6-foot-4, and has made great use of that catch radius this season. He's caught five red zone touchdown passes, two more than any other Buckeye wideout.

Third-year wide receiver Julian Fleming and second-year Emeka Egbuka, the other two starters for the squad, have caught three and two, respectively. Egbuka added a red zone rushing score against Toledo.

Thanks to execution of both its run and pass games, the Buckeyes have boasted the best red zone efficiency in college football this year. Now it comes down to maintaining such a designation.

"Just because we've done it leading up to this point doesn't mean it's going to happen again," Day said. "We've got to continue to run the ball down there with good scheme, understand that. Take care of the football. Then execute in the red-area throwing game at a high level."