

Ohio State Head Coach Ryan Day Previews Big Ten Championship Game



Ohio State head coach Ryan Day conducted his final media appearance of the week with his weekly radio show on Thursday afternoon, during which he discussed his team's preparation for the Big Ten Championship Game against Northwestern, the Early Signing Period and much more.

The Buckeyes are considered a 21-point favorite over the Wildcats and look to bring home their fourth-consecutive conference title with a win on Saturday afternoon (12 p.m. on FOX).

Here's a bullet-point recap of what Day had to say:

- Day said he's excited to play again, but added the season has been difficult. "It's getting old saying how hard it is, but it's just the truth."
- Day said they'd like to get some of the younger players in the game so that they can get more comfortable with their depth.
- "A lot of times, the game is easier than practice."
- Day said Northwestern has always run the ball well and has a good offensive line.
- Day called Wildcats quarterback Peyton Ramsey a winner. "He does everything you want of a quarterback." Noted that it's helpful to have faced him before when he was at Indiana.
- Day on Northwestern's linebackers: "Those three linebackers have played forever. Every single time you put the film on, they're on the field."
- Day credited defensive coordinator Mike Hankwitz for putting the Wildcats in good situations defensively. "He's really good." Said the game is a chess match when they're facing Hankwitz.
- Day said they're not taking the opportunity to play in the Big Ten Championship Game for granted. "There's been times where you build up and it gets taken away from you."
- Day on the differences between Saturday's noon kickoff and previous Big Ten title games: "Everything about it is different." Noted the lack of a Michigan game beforehand and the ability to watch other games afterward.
- Day said director of player development Mark Pantoni did a great job with the 2021 recruiting class despite the circumstances. "We had several guys who signed yesterday who didn't even step foot on campus. That's just amazing to me."
- Day said he identified three in-state recruits he needed to land when he was hired: 2019 Lewis Center Olentangy Orange five-star defensive end Zach Harrison, 2020 Cincinnati Princeton five-star offensive tackle Paris Johnson and 2021 Pickerington (Ohio) North five-star defensive end Jack Sawyer. "Those are must gets."

- Day noted how you're not just recruiting the player, but the family, too, and that you could tell given how involved the parents were in getting football back this fall. Added he embraces that unique aspect.
- Day said their graduation rate and team GPA is proof the Buckeyes care about academics. "Going to class is cool."
- Day said there's risk in going to five-wide wide receiver sets, but notes it does put a lot of speed on the field and allows quarterback Justin Fields to take advantage of his legs more than tighter sets. "You try to keep the (defense) on their heels, but they know exactly what protection you're in, and that's the negative to it."
- Day praised the offensive line's depth for stepping up against Michigan State. "I'm hoping we can get all those guys out there this weekend and they can all be together." Hopes to have the entire starting lineup back against Northwestern.
- Day said the tight ends have done a really good job in all aspects this year, particularly in blocking.
- Day said it was great to see running back Trey Sermon break out against the Spartans and that he and fellow running back Master Teague have done a good job of not taking negative plays. "We've kept things on schedule."
- Day said he's happy to see players get recognized with the All-Big Ten awards. "I just want to make sure some of these guys, whether the team or individual, get some of the recognition they deserve after everything they've been through."
- On Cornerback Shaun Wade winning the Big Ten defensive back of the year award: "It's great to see him playing his best football down the stretch. Hopefully he's going to play his best game on Saturday."
- Day said he's glad the families will be allowed to attend the Big Ten title game. "Everyone misses their family, and they want them there. That's a lot of these guys' 'why' and they want to make them proud."
- Day said the families used Zoom to watch the Senior Tackle. We're trying to do what we can, but there are so many restrictions."
- Day on potential changes to the Big Ten's 21-day rule for positive coronavirus tests: "I haven't really gone down that road." Noted athletic director Gene Smith is in talks with the conference, though. "We just want to get through Saturday and then we'll come up for air and see where we are."
- Day said senior defensive tackle Ryan Day hit him with a snowball during practice yesterday.
- Day said there have been many sacrifices made by the players and coaches this season. Added he's also said his son R.J. can't be around the facility at all this year. "I don't know if anybody signed up for this. It's something else. But when you're in this together, it makes it all worth it."

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