

Ohio State Head Coach Ryan Day Says Avoiding Distractions, Trusting Foundation Built Throughout Season Keys To Success In The Game



Since suffering its third straight loss to Michigan on Nov. 30, 2023, Ohio State and head coach Ryan Day have devoted all their time and resources to getting back to The Game and fielding a talented and together team that could turn the rivalry back in their favor.

All that time and effort spent in the offseason and during the season has led to this week, where the Buckeyes stand four days out from the biggest game on their schedule, a battle with arch rival, 6-5 Michigan, this time at Ohio Stadium Saturday afternoon at noon.

Now fully entrenched in preparation for The Game after a year of talk and criticism, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said he is happy that the matchup his team has been waiting for since last November has finally come.

“I’m excited with the fact that our guys are here now,” Day said in front of a larger-than-usual contingent of media personnel at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center on Tuesday afternoon. “Because when you go through the offseason and you talk about this game, it’s just like, ‘Alright, well how many times we’re going to talk about this? We have to get to this game and go play it. We’re finally here right now, so that’ll be the focus.”

Saturday afternoon’s rivalry game carries some significant stakes for Day and his program. The Buckeyes are trying to avoid a four-game losing streak to the Wolverines, a possible result that would only increase the negative noise and criticism surrounding the program and their leader.

With a win, Day and Co. would quash all of that chatter and put the rivalry back in their corner, while also clinching a spot in the Big Ten Championship against No. 1 Oregon on Dec. 7.

Day and his program are undoubtedly aware of the high stakes of Saturday’s game, but with four more

days left to prepare for the Wolverines, the Buckeyes coach is focusing on sticking to the same principles that got them to this point of the year and avoid any outside distractions that may arise leading up to kickoff.

“This part of the week, you’re putting the plan together, and you really try to make sure you’re focusing on the process right now,” Day said. “Because you only can really control what you can control. And every time you can start getting focused on things that don’t matter, you have to get right back into your work. And that was the message to the guys on Sunday. So that’s it.

“We’re going to really focus on the process, the same process that we’ve been working on all year. Everything that we do in the offseason, every decision that’s made in terms of the coaching staff, the roster, how we practice schematics, is all working towards this moment right here. So let’s just go to work, trust the process and focus on what we’re going to get done today.”

Despite this business-like approach, Day is also privy to how much this game means to himself and those within his program. On Monday, Day told WBNS 10 that losing in the rivalry is “one of the worst things that’s happened to me in my life.”

When asked about the significance of The Game to him personally on Tuesday, Day didn’t go into too much detail other than saying “I think you know what it means, it means the world.” Instead, he shared that he wants this game to be less about him and more about the players, especially those who wanted to come back.

“To say that this team and those leaders and these seniors want to win this game, it’d be one of the biggest understatements of all time,” he said. “So they don’t need any extra motivation.”

“I’m excited. I’m excited about this game. I’m excited about this team. I love the look in their eye. I love coming to work every day. But this is not about me,” Day added. “It’s about the seniors who decided to come back. They want to have a pair of gold pants. They want to have the hardware. So that’s what motivates me, and I’m excited for them, so they can go out there and play this thing and go win it.”

Regardless of his or his team’s feelings towards The Game, Day knows his team must ultimately enter Ohio Stadium on Saturday with great confidence and aggression but also great poise and maturity, a combination that he thinks is needed in an emotional rivalry game like this one.

“Everything in the entire program has been built to win this game, so now we just have to trust that and go play with confidence, with great energy, great passion, and playing for your brothers and everybody just doing their job. I think sometimes it’s easy in a game like this to try to do something extraordinary. The only thing that needs to be extraordinary is their effort. Everything else, they just need to do their job.”