

Ohio State Pass Rush Working On Containment



Dual-threat quarterbacks present problems to a defense in part because they can break apart the structure of a team.

Coverage schemes aren't typically able to hold up when plays are extended, and spying specific defenders on a quarterback means sacrificing in other areas. Plus, running lanes for a signal caller can be a sign of an aggressive pass rush.

Mobility is one of the traits Michigan second-year quarterback J.J. McCarthy possesses. As such, Ohio State is taking precautions to keep him hemmed in.

"We have a hard-charging, aggressive defensive line," Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said. "I think that any time you have guys that really get after it, scrambling can be an issue. We continue to work on it, I guess I'll say. We'll keep practicing. It's definitely an issue, though, when you have guys that get after the quarterback. Now it's my job to fix it."

Many of Taulia Tagovailoa's best plays against Ohio State in week 12 involved his feet.

His touchdown pass on a fourth-and-goal play that cut the Buckeyes' lead to 33-30 in the fourth quarter required him to evade several pass rushers and throw on the run going to his right.

Tagovailoa scored the Terrapins' previous touchdown on a 5-yard run, and gained 26 yards on a scramble in the third quarter when his receivers were well-covered.

"Ultimately it does come down to your athletes versus their athlete," Knowles said. "You just do everything you can to put guys in the position (to make a play). But it does become, like, control chaos. We try to make all these moves and chess pieces and we think we're doing a good job of it. It's hard to control the uncontrollable."

Thus far in 2022, McCarthy has picked up 213 yards and five touchdowns on the ground. From what Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh said in September, the signal caller runs a sub-4.6 40-yard dash.

“He’s definitely dynamic,” Ohio State fourth-year defensive end Zach Harrison said. “We’ve definitely got to keep in mind that he has the ability to pull the ball at any moment and run for a big gain. We’ve just got to be aware of that, that that’s a possibility.”

Harrison noted the key is staying disciplined in one’s pass rush. Still attacking the pocket, but keeping a sense of your assignment in containing the quarterback.

“You’ve got to rush smart,” Harrison said. “I feel like we’ve got to do that, just rush smart. Know where the escape lanes are, know where I’m going, know where the other ends are going, defensive tackles are going, linebackers fitting. Just being aware of everything that the defense has going on.”

Ohio State and Michigan kick off at noon Saturday.