

Ohio State Prepared To Call On Dallan Hayden In The Game



Going into The Game with a true freshman running back starting isn't an ideal scenario for Ohio State or Michigan, but it's a challenge that not only are the Buckeyes potentially faced with, but it's one they are embracing.

The health of TreVeyon Henderson and Miyan Williams, who have both been banged up throughout the season, remains a concern heading into Saturday. Williams missed last week's game after suffering a lower-body injury against Indiana, and while Henderson returned to the field against Maryland, he didn't look like his usual self.

This opened the door for freshman Dallan Hayden, who took over in the second half of the win over the Terrapins and led the Buckeyes with 146 rushing yards and three scores. He hit big plays when needed and helped Ohio State grind out the clock late, signs of an experienced player despite only appearing in his 11th game with the Buckeyes.

"The way he stepped up last week was certainly tremendous and encouraging as we move into this rivalry week, and great to see him taking care of the football," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said. "That's the No. 1 thing we need. And so we'll have to have a good week of practice. And I know he's got to prepare hard to get ready to play his game."

As Ohio State prepares for The Game, the possibility exists that Hayden could be the first rusher on the field for the Buckeyes. But, even if Henderson or Williams are able to go against the Wolverines, Day did not discount Hayden still getting some work in.

"I think it's definitely worth the conversation," Day said. "When you start to see you put on the film, and the film speaks for itself, you've got to make that decision, who's the best guy in this moment to go put on field."

And while the preference is for Henderson and Williams to have practiced and gotten in some work in the lead up to The Game, Day said their experience - not just this season, but their entire careers at Ohio State - leaves the door open for them to play off little to no practice.

"You're in Week 12 here so it's not like it's early in the season and these guys are inexperienced. I think early in the year you'd say, 'Well if you didn't practice though the week, it's hard for them to play in the game.'"

The plan is currently for Henderson and Williams to practice with Hayden continuing to fill in where needed - perhaps even in a starting role on Saturday - and Day is confident all will be able to make an impact if they play against Michigan.

"We'd like for them to practice and we're going to plan on them practicing," he said. "But if they miss a little bit here and there to get healthy to go play in the game, then we'll adjust accordingly. But these are veteran players who have played a lot of football."