

Ohio State Shakes Off Early Mistakes In Win Over Michigan State



Ohio State's win over Michigan State was headlined by gaudy statistics from third-year quarterback C.J. Stroud and second-year wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr.

But, the Buckeyes also showcased their resilience by bouncing back from a few early momentum plays that fell into Michigan State's favor. Although Ohio State largely overmatched the Spartans for much of the afternoon, head coach Ryan Day acknowledged that he felt the team got off to a slow start following the win.

Playing into that slow start was freshman kicker Jayden Fielding sailing the opening kickoff out of bounds and allowing Michigan State to start its first possession from its own 35-yard line. From there, Michigan State quickly reached Ohio State territory thanks to a 20-yard connection between Spartans quarterback Payton Thorne and wide receiver Jayden Reed. However, the Buckeye defense hardened and ultimately forced a turnover — as safety Lathan Ransom tracked down a deep ball from Thorne to Reed and intercepted it in the end zone.

Ohio State then went 80 yards in seven plays and 2:20, a drive capped off by a 19-yard touchdown strike from Stroud to Harrison. But the Buckeyes' next offensive possession did not go as swimmingly. After picking up a quick first down and a 3-yard gain on first down, Stroud set his sights on wide receiver Emeka Egbuka but instead found Michigan State cornerback Charles Brantley — who took the interception 32-yards for a touchdown.

"It didn't exactly start the way we wanted it on offense," Day said. "Nobody panicked at all. I thought the way the defense played - Lathan got the early interception, and across the board, we gave up a couple of things outside and a couple of penalties, but after that, they did a great job of stopping the run. I thought the defensive line was strong. Tommy and the linebackers were excellent.

"Across the board, our guys played strong. When you have that type of back and forth and that balance

on offense and defense and they play against each other," he continued. "I just think overall we played good football on the road."

With attention to his early interception, Stroud noted that there's no need to dwell on previous plays and that all that matters is what's ahead of him.

"It's just the next play. There's no positive in thinking about negative things that happened to you in the past," Stroud said. "I definitely think that has to do with some of my off-the-field character, just that I'm prayed-up. At the end of the day, mistakes happen.

"At the end of the day, plays happen and you just have to bounce back. It's always about the answer," he continued. "It's never about how you start, it's how you finish. I think last year taught us that a lot. And then just my life growing up, just perseverance and working through tough times and tough plays."

Stroud also emphasized that the early-game interception didn't throw off the Buckeyes' gameplan at all and expressed gratitude to Day and offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson for remaining confident in him.

"We have coaches like Coach Day and Coach Wilson, they're going to call it just as good as they were before you had the interception," Stroud said. "That just gives you all the confidence in the world."

After the pick-six, Ohio State outscored Michigan State 42-13 and Stroud tossed five additional touchdowns, including a pair to Harrison. The Buckeyes' defense also largely remained stout, aside from a pair of scoring drives, one of which was boosted by penalties while the other came in garbage time.

To safety Ronnie Hickman, he noted that Ohio State, and the defense specifically, showed the necessary discipline to come away with the win.

"It's a part of the game, stuff happens all the time. Everyone doesn't play perfect, but you've got to be ready to go when your number is called," Hickman said. "We take pride in sudden change and not giving up a touchdown, because it's pretty easy for offenses once they turn the ball over, then they get the ball out and it can kind of get bad out. But we take pride in going out there and stopping them."