

Ohio State Still Struggling To Convert In Short-Down Situations



In Ohio State's 17-14 win over Notre Dame, they seemingly fixed an issue that had been plaguing them early on in the season. After going 12 for 34 in the first three games on third down, they were able to move the sticks on 10 of 17 tries against the Fighting Irish.

The most notable attempts were the third-and-19 that Kyle McCord converted with 15 seconds left in the game to Emeka Egbuka that got the Buckeyes down to the 1-yard line and the game winner where Chip Trayanum would get over the goal line with one second to go.

Even with their success in late down situations, converting on those in short yardage was still something they struggled with. Despite Trayanum getting in on the last play, there were multiple blown opportunities where OSU could have kept drives going or even added points.

"There were four opportunities where the whole game could be different if we convert in those situations," Ryan Day said. "So, I'm upset about that, but I'm not going to be upset right now because that was one heck of a win for our team."

Ultimately it didn't matter since they came out with the win, but there were two fourth-and-1 opportunities the Buckeyes didn't convert. They didn't try to push the ball 1 yard through the middle on either of those plays. The first was on the goal line, and McCord rolled out right and targeted tight end Cade Stover in the end zone, but the pass was tipped by Notre Dame linebacker Jaylen Sneed and fell to the ground for a turnover on downs.

There was another chance for OSU to convert on fourth-and-1 with just 4:17 left in the game, and Egbuka ran an end-around, took the handoff but was stuffed when he got to the right side of the field, failing to convert on what could have been the Buckeyes last chance to score.

"We didn't get it the one before and I'm really upset about that. We have to get that yard," Day said. "Then on that play in particular we got the look that we wanted and we've got three for three right there and we thought we could knife it in for 1 yard because when they're inside playing defense, there's an opportunity to get the ball outside and we didn't do it."

Throughout the season, the Buckeyes have struggled to convert on third-and-short, and largely that has been with the run. Whether it's the offensive line not getting enough push, or the runners not finding the gap that's there, it seemed like some trust from Day may have been lost in that aspect of the game.

The third-and-goal before Stover was targeted in the end zone, running back Miyan Williams came into the game to try to fight his way in for a touchdown up the middle, but he was stuffed at the line.

Day knows they need to work on getting that extra yard, and now they have an off week to attempt to figure out any issue that has been giving them trouble. It was proven by Traynum's touchdown that short-down situations could be the difference in winning and losing. It worked out for them this game, and they were very good in third-and-long chances but getting that 1 yard when they need it is something they need to improve on.