Predictions: BSB Split On OSU-Rutgers

Chase Brown: Buckeye Offense Not Perfect, But Good Enough

C.J. Stroud returns to Ohio State against Rutgers. It's not quite the *Return of the Jedi* or the *Return of the King,* but it's a good sign for the Buckeyes. Is that a good reference? I'm not sure. Let me continue it for a second, though. Stroud isn't a Luke Skywalker or Aragorn in my eyes. Who can be? The fictional characters are legends in their own right.

Still, Stroud is a talented college quarterback. Ohio State head coach Ryan Day displays complete confidence in Stroud's ability whenever he has the opportunity. He's made himself clear that Stroud gives the Buckeyes their best chance to win football games, and I agree. I will trust the man who selected and developed Dwayne Haskins and identified and brought in Justin Fields.

Stroud will lead Ohio State to win on Saturday. The Buckeyes may not look great in all areas — Rutgers will cause some significant problems defensively — but they will do enough to win the game and cover the spread against the Scarlet Knights.

I expect Day to rely heavily on Henderson early in the contest, opening up the passing game for Stroud, Chris Olave, Garrett Wilson and Jaxon Smith-Njigba. Heck, maybe even Jeremy Ruckert can catch some passes. After knocking some of Stroud's rust off, I think Ohio State finds its groove and navigates to a 15-point win.

Ohio State 35, Rutgers 20

Wyatt Crosher: Scarlet Knights Come Up Short

What a world we live in.

For years, the Ohio State-Rutgers prediction was a game of how high can you predict without it seeming too ridiculous. Now, after the season that both of these teams have had, the two-touchdown spread feels almost generous to the Buckeyes on the road in Piscataway, N.J.

It is a credit to Greg Schiano that I think the Scarlet Knights have a legitimate shot to win this game. That will happen if they can force turnovers and get the offense moving through dual-threat

quarterback Noah Vedral and talented receivers Bo Melton and Aron Cruickshank.

But for me, I just don't think Rutgers has enough in the tank offensively to make it happen. TreVeyon Henderson might not average over 10 yards a carry again, but he should still find space simply because he is that special of a player, and I think he is the difference in a too-close-for-comfort Ohio State win.

Ohio State 34, Rutgers 24

Patrick Mayhorn: Ohio State Pushed To The Limit

Rutgers challenged Ohio State with an impressive and creative gameplan in 2020, and I have no reason to believe that the Scarlet Knights can't do the same this year. Of course, the Buckeyes still won that matchup by 22 points, 49-27.

Those Buckeyes are not these, though, specifically in the passing attack. Justin Fields was able to make Rutgers pay for its aggressive defense with bombs down the field, hitting receivers in stride with no problems. I don't have the same confidence in C.J. Stroud, even if he has taken some time to rehabilitate his dinged-up shoulder. Plus, we haven't seem him face a truly aggressive front yet, at least not one as aggressive as the Scarlet Knights. Can he handle the blitz? Even Fields struggled with that.

But, Rutgers does have to score to win, and that's where I think it runs into some problems. Count me as skeptical that the Buckeye defense is fixed, as some optimists have proclaimed, after a win over a disastrous Akron squad. Could it be improved? Sure, but it's not as good as the groups at Syracuse or Michigan, which surrendered 17 and 13 points to this Rutgers offense, respectively. I think the Scarlet Knights can score at least once more against this group than they did against either of those. Add a bad Stroud turnover and some special teams magic, and I can get Rutgers to four touchdowns with some comfort.

But, I think they'll only be joining the Buckeyes there, and an aggressive Schiano goes for the win late, dialing up a 2-point conversion when the two converge with just a few minutes left and coming up short. Buckeyes survive, barely.

Ohio State 28, Rutgers 27

Mark Rea: Upset Alert? I'm Not Seeing It

I've heard a lot of back-and-forth regarding this game, most of it from fans and pundits who believe Ohio State had better be on upset watch when the team bus pulls into Piscataway. I'm not sure where that mind-set comes from, especially if you look at the history of this series.

Since Rutgers joined the Big Ten – and I'm still trying to figure out why it was invited in the first place – the Scarlet Knights are 0-7 against Ohio State. The average margin of victory for the Buckeyes in those seven games is 36 points, a gap of five touchdowns.

The closest the Knights have come to beating the Buckeyes came last year during a 49-27 loss when Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano threw everything including the kitchen sink at Ohio State, and the final margin was still 22 points.

Granted, the Buckeyes bear little resemblance to last year's team. They are much younger while the Knights are marginally better. But Rutgers remains offensively challenged, and despite the fact it was

playing an extremely weak Akron team last week, the OSU defense seems to be settling down – at least up front and in the secondary.

Meanwhile, the Buckeyes continue to purr along offensively, and that's with two different rookie quarterbacks (so far) at the controls not to mention the mysterious disappearance from the game plan of Chris Olave.

Look for heavy doses of TreVeyon Henderson, a big game from Olave and a relatively easy road victory.

Ohio State 45, Rutgers 20