

Predictions: BSB Staff Predicts Ohio State Win In Season Opener



Andy Anders: OSU Pulls Away Late

There's been plenty of national and local pundits predicting Ohio State to roll through Notre Dame Saturday, and while it wouldn't be a surprise to see the game play out that way, I think the season-opener stays in close contest for awhile.

For one, the Fighting Irish have strengths where the Buckeyes had their weaknesses last season. With or without fifth-year guard Jarrett Patterson, Notre Dame should have one of the more physical, bruising offensive lines in the country this year and can run the ball downhill with a similar effectiveness to Oregon or Michigan last season. The Buckeyes should be improved in their front seven defending the run this season, but to what extent that shows in Week 1 remains up for debate. It'll be interesting to see what the defense's counter to star junior tight end Michael Mayer is as well. Tight ends have hurt Ohio State in the past.

On the flipside, the few groups that were able to slow the Buckeyes' offense down in 2021 boasted game-changing defensive lines that could force ground game inconsistencies and get some semblance of pressure on redshirt sophomore quarterback C.J. Stroud. Notre Dame redshirt junior defensive end Isaiah Foskey is one of the country's best edge rushers and didn't even lead the squad in quarterback pressures last year — that honor belongs to graduate defensive tackle Jayson Ademilola, who racked up 50 tackles.

Ohio State's huge offensive advantage in the passing game and some green around the gills of Notre Dame sophomore quarterback Tyler Buchner should prove the difference Saturday. But with it being Week 1 in the new Jim Knowles defense, I see it taking until the fourth quarter for Ohio State to gain separation.

Ohio State 42, Notre Dame 27

Jack Emerson: OSU Offense Picks Up Where It Left Off

For the first time in Ohio State's long, illustrious history the Buckeyes will open the season with a top-five matchup. While the hype around the game has built for months, the on-the-field product will not

live up to those expectations.

Despite losing program cornerstones Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson at wide receiver and a pair of key pieces on the offensive line, the Buckeyes' offense is expected to be one of the most dangerous units in the country once again. Headlined by the three-headed monster of quarterback C.J. Stroud, running back TreVeyon Henderson and wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba, Ohio State's offense will prove that it is still a force to be reckoned with come Saturday. I anticipate the Buckeyes' offense to maintain its high-powered passing attack while boasting a more efficient run game — primarily thanks to the addition of offensive line coach Justin Frye.

The Jim Knowles-led defense will not be overly challenged by the Notre Dame offense, which will boast a first-time starting quarterback in sophomore Tyler Buchner against the Buckeyes. Outside of tight end Michael Mayer, the Fighting Irish lack established pass catchers and an underwhelming backfield. I also believe the raucous nature of the crowd will impact Buchner.

The Buckeyes should win handily come Saturday night.

Ohio State 38, Notre Dame 17

Braden Moles: Ohio State Defense Makes Statement In Opener

The offense is a known quantity for Ohio State. Everyone knows that C.J. Stroud, Jaxon Smith-Njigba and TreVeyon Henderson will get their due, and there aren't many defenses – at least until the Buckeyes reach the playoffs, if that does indeed happen – that will be able to stop them. That's why all eyes on Saturday will be on Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles and the new defense he is taking for a spin against the Fighting Irish.

Most of the parts are the same, with Zach Harrison, Jack Sawyer, J.T. Tuimoloau, Taron Vincent and others back on the defensive line, Tommy Eichenberg and Steele Chambers at linebacker, and Cameron Brown, Denzel Burke, Ronnie Hickman and Josh Proctor all back in the secondary, but expect to see a different defense take the field for the Buckeyes – one that could be much dominant than the product on the field last season.

It helps Ohio State that Buchner is making his first start in Ohio Stadium, a place that few opponents want to play, let alone get their first start, but it's the hand he's been dealt. Along with a depleted receiving group and some injuries on the offensive line, it could make for a challenging evening for Buchner and the Notre Dame offense, but a potential feast for Ohio State's defense.

There could be some fine-tuning required for the defense as things get rolling, but any deficiencies – potentially in the form of Mayer going off – will likely be masked by Ohio State's offense, one that will begin what could be a record-breaking season at Ohio Stadium on Saturday.

Ohio State 41, Notre Dame 24