

Predictions: Ohio State Wins Tight Contest With Penn State To Remain In Big Ten East Hunt



Third-ranked Ohio State will kick off the team's biggest game of the season - at least so far - on Saturday at Ohio Stadium, set to host No. 7 Penn State in a battle of some of the best the Big Ten has to offer this season.

Here are Buckeye Sports Bulletin's predictions for how this battle of the titans will go on Saturday. Check BuckeyeSports.com every Friday for the latest predictions heading into Ohio State's upcoming game.

Patrick Engels: Buckeyes Pull Away Late In Big Ten Slug Fest

After a comfortable road win against Purdue last week, Ohio State faces what in my opinion is its stiffest opponent yet when they welcome No. 7 Penn State to Ohio Stadium on Saturday. Like many have said this week, this is likely James Franklin's most talented team to date, and, unlike other years, they should have a legitimate shot to avenge some tough losses of the past and pull off a significant upset.

Penn State's strength lies within their defense, which comes into the game ranked first in the nation in total defense (193.7 yards per game) and second in points allowed (8.0 points per game). The Nittany Lions have "dogs" on that unit from top to bottom, starting on the defensive line with Adisa Isaac and Chop Robinson on the defensive line and ending with Kalen King and Curtis Jacobs in the secondary, making it an extremely difficult task for Kyle McCord and the Buckeyes' offense to consistently move the ball down the field. This will only get harder for Ohio State, who come into this matchup as banged up as they have been in quite some time on offense with the availability of Emeka Egbuka, TreVeyon Henderson, Miyan Williams and Chip Trayanum in question.

With a depleted running attack, I can see the Buckeyes attacking Penn State with their passing game, specifically with Marvin Harrison Jr. and Cade Stover, who have easily become McCord's two favorite

targets this season. I'm also watching out for freshman wideouts Brandon Inniss and Carnell Tate, who may be relied upon if Egbuka is not ready to go. Despite an intimidating Nittany Lions unit, I expect Ohio State to make enough plays on offense to give them a slight lead, leaving it up to the defense to close the door.

Knowles' unit has been fantastic this season, and they will need another masterful performance if they want to come out of this weekend unscathed. Running backs Nic Singleton and Kaytron Allen are beasts on the ground, and quarterback Drew Allar is an emerging talent, but I can see the Buckeyes' making some game-changing plays to turn the tide in the Buckeyes favor. With a raucous crowd to assist them, Ohio State should be able to limit their production in both the passing and ground game, and I can even see them making some game-changing plays at the end of the game.

I'm predicting the Buckeyes to force a key turnover in the fourth quarter that ends a promising drive for the Nittany Lions, which gives them all the momentum they need to extend the lead late and come away with a signature win. **Ohio State: 21, Penn State: 16**

Braden Moles: Nittany Lions Lack Roar Against Ohio State

Notre Dame was a solid test for Ohio State, but Penn State will be the first true measuring stick for the Buckeyes after passing the midway point of the season.

Penn State's defense has been written about ad nauseam, so I don't need to go over all the various statistical categories in which they lead the country - spoiler alert, it's most of them - but the long and short of it is that it is probably the best defense Ohio State will face all season, with playmakers at all three levels of the defense.

Can an Ohio State offense with a penchant for starting slow stand a chance if it struggles to find a rhythm again? With the potential of Henderson, Williams, Trayanum and Ebuka all being on the sideline, I do have some concerns about how the offense might fare if it needs to put up more points than usual.

But at the end of the day, I don't think Ohio State's offense will decide this one. Drew Allar might be the best Penn State quarterback in several years, but if the team doesn't let him throw the ball downfield, how much does it really matter? Penn State has been downright abysmal at creating explosive plays, and against an Ohio State defense that has been perfectly content bending but not breaking, the Nittany Lions might be in for a significant challenge against the Buckeyes.

Considering the fact that this one is in Columbus - a place that Penn State head coach James Franklin has had some historical difficulties competing in - I see Ohio State being able to set a tone early, maybe on both sides of the ball depending on who ends up playing, and ride the momentum from there. Penn State is too good, however, for the Buckeyes to completely pull away, so there could be some nerves in the fourth quarter, something Ryan Day feels his team is prepared for. **Ohio State 24, Penn State 17**

Greg Wilson: Buckeyes Prevail Over Penn State

This might be the best team that Franklin has had since he became the head coach at Penn State. He has only managed to get the best of the Buckeyes once, and he hasn't been able to beat them in Columbus to this point.

Ohio State is dealing with multiple injuries, and whether Egbuka, Henderson, Williams and Traynum will be able to play is information Day doesn't want to give out until right before the game begins. However, whether they do play or not, wide receiver and running back are two of the deepest rooms the Buckeyes have, so they will be just as good offensively regardless.

These are two of the top defenses in the country to this point, so I think it will be a lower scoring game, with the advantage going to the home team that will make it hard for the Nittany Lions to communicate when they're on offense. The Buckeyes bend but don't break defense that is 14th in the country in stopping teams in the red zone will pay off in a game where both teams will likely need to put long drives together to put points on the board.

The offenses have had two very different approaches, Ohio State attacking through the air and Penn State on the ground, but both have been effective. It's going to be a close game that will likely be decided late in the fourth quarter, but I think the Buckeyes come out on top. **Ohio State 24, Penn State 20**