

Radio Show Recap: Ryan Day, Greg Schiano Preview Ohio State's B1G Opener



Head coach Urban Meyer was back at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center throughout the week as he prepared Ohio State in practices for its Big Ten opener Saturday against Rutgers, but his weekly radio show with 97.1 The Fan deferred to acting head coach Ryan Day and defensive coordinator Greg Schiano.

How have the Buckeyes gotten ready for the Scarlet Knights with Meyer back around the team? Day and Schiano break down the latest in Thursday's final media appearance of the week.

Ryan Day

- In Ohio State's 77-31 win over Oregon State, Day said the offense's goal was to come out and set the tempo from the start.
 - He said Ohio State's plan was to rotate personnel at "four, five plays a clip" and go fast. Day said Ohio State runs a tempo period in practice to perfect it.
- Day said sophomore quarterback Dwayne Haskins is getting "better and better every week at identifying, especially protections" and reading defenses.
 - Day also credits junior Michael Jordan after he moved from left guard for the past two seasons and made his first career start at center as a key communicator among the offensive line.
- Haskins is comfortable around "a lot of guys" at wide receiver, but Day noted the quarterback's "great relationship" with junior Austin Mack.
 - "I think there's a lot of people around here who understand what a special player Austin Mack is," Day said. "I think he's had a really good camp. So we just keep building from there."

- With how fast Ohio State operates its offense, Day said the running backs are unable to go more than six or seven plays at a time, but the concept keeps each player fresh.
 - “A fresh (sophomore) J.K. Dobbins or (junior) Mike Weber is huge,” Day said. “To go three, four, five, six plays and the defense is on their seventh play — all of a sudden, you throw one of those two guys in there with fresh legs, that’s a problem for them. (Dobbins and Weber) understand that and we understand that.”
- Day thought the “communication was excellent” between the staff from the sidelines to the booth. He pointed to offensive coordinator/tight ends coach Kevin Wilson (booth), special assistant to the head coach Tim Hinton (sideline) and offensive line coach Greg Studrawa (sideline) among those to help him on offense.
 - “It’s different this year,” Day said. “There’s not as many guys we can have in the box because (the NCAA) has a headset rule that limited the amount of people that can have headsets. So what’s happened is our communication had to be really, really clean. ... When that information is clean and accurate, then you can just get into the kind of right plays and get going.”
- Day said “there’s a fine line” between how much Rutgers head coach Chris Ash, a former Ohio State co-defensive coordinator (2014-15), knows of Ohio State’s verbiage and scheme.
 - “He knows us and the guys here know him,” Day said of Ash. “I was not here when he was here, but there’s still a lot of remnants of what he did here in terms of our coverage structure and some of the stuff that we do in terms of our front and blitz patterns. ... But if you overdo that too much, then all of a sudden, you start to get out of what the kids know.”
- Day said the Rutgers defense is “very veteran” with a strong back end full of “probably some NFL players.”
 - Among the secondary, Rutgers boasts senior cornerback Blessuan Austin, whom Day spoke highly of: “A little banged up — I know he missed a little bit of time in the game last week, maybe missed a little practice this week — but in terms of talent level, off the charts,” Day said. “Really, a lot of respect for him.”
- The special teams unit was “solid” against Oregon State, but Day said Meyer’s return helped through the first couple of practices prior to Rutgers.
 - “It’s good to have Coach back this week,” Day said of Meyer. “He’s back in the meetings, watching film with the guys, making corrections, enhancing in certain areas. So that’s a big boost for us, getting him back to do that.”
 - “It’s great to have him back this week, back at practice,” Day said of Meyer. “He’s running around and exerting a ton of energy into practice. Guys were happy to see him. We had two good days of practice. (Wednesday) was excellent. Obviously, in the meetings and pushing the staff and things like that. So yeah, back to normal really fast.”
- Tuesday was well over 90 degrees, but Day said Ohio State pushed through its practice at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center
 - “The guys who have been here said that was probably one of the hottest days they’ve ever been, had here on a Tuesday,” Day said. “So it was not easy, but our sports medicine people do a great job making sure we’re keeping the guys hydrated, having the wet towels, keeping the guys cool. If there’s ever an issue, we get them right inside as fast as we can and monitor after all of the guys. Obviously, anyone with sickle-cell trait is something we have to focus on and make sure we’re on top of that. We have the best guys in the business at that.”

- Beyond Haskins, redshirt-freshman backup Tate Martell and West Virginia graduate-transfer junior Chris Chugunov are two of the next quarterbacks in line for Ohio State.
 - “He’s a guy who has gotten better throughout the preseason,” Day said of Martell. “He’s explosive in a lot of areas. He can do (a lot). Well, first off, he’s hard to prepare for, if you’re a defensive coordinator because he can beat you with his feet and his arm. So just keep getting better every day with him.”
 - “The struggle there is just that he hasn’t taken as many reps,” Day said of Chugunov. “When you’re in the preseason, you start to rep some of your twos, your threes more and you can kind of get them going. The challenge right now is that we’re getting ready for games. Dwayne and Tate need those reps to get ready to play. Now, you have (freshman) Matthew (Baldwin) and Chris still looking to develop. So that’s a challenge. Sunday we let the threes stay out there and do a little work that way and try to get them to come on, but we’re working at it, yeah.”

Greg Schiano

- Asked about which younger players stood out against Oregon State, Schiano said sophomore linebacker Pete Werner caught his attention.
 - Schiano said Werner did “a heck of a job” and “showed great promise” as a first-time starter.
- Among several freshmen — defensive end Tyler Friday, defensive tackle Tommy Togiai, defensive end Tyreke Smith and defensive tackle Taron Vincent — to debut on the defensive line, Schiano said Smith in particular impressed as an early piece on Ohio State’s third-down “rushmen” package.
 - “We’re very, very optimistic about the future there at the defensive line,” Schiano said. “To get so many of them playing, and to have Tyreke in there with the first ‘rushmen’ group — Coach J has a lot of faith in him — we threw him out there and he did a decent job. Now, that’s the jumping-off point. Now, he’s got to start to take that and get an understanding.”
- After sophomore middle linebacker Tuf Borland played on a 10-play “pitch count” against Oregon State, Schiano said Borland would see more snaps in Ohio State’s matchup with Rutgers.
 - “We do have a pitch count,” Schiano said. “It will be more than it was Saturday. As we logically progress him, as long as there’s no setbacks, we’ll just keep upping it, upping it and upping it. The good thing is (sophomore) Baron Browning went in there and played really well. ... We’re going to play more than three linebackers. Why? Because we have more than three. You don’t ever want to have good players not playing, so we’re going to keep them fresh as we do the D-line, certain positions and see how that (linebacker) rotation goes.”
- Redshirt freshman Shaun Wade showed a “multi-talented” defender when he debuted against Oregon State, according to Schiano, with the potential for more time in multiple positions going forward.
 - “I think Shaun could play in the nickel, I think Shaun could play safety, I think Shaun could play at corner,” Schiano said of Wade. “Most of the times, when you move guys from corner to safety, it’s because, well, they’re just not quite good enough to be a corner, especially around here, right? It’s elite to be a corner. Shaun can do that, but we’re going to move Shaun all over the place. He’s a guy that I could see getting a bigger and bigger role as time

goes on.”

- Schiano said he expects fifth-year senior linebacker Dante Booker “to just get better and better as the season goes on.”
 - “That’s exciting,” Schiano said. “Again, another guy that gives us depth and a reason we want to play more than just three ‘backers.”
- After the defense’s performance against Oregon State, which utilized misdirections and screens, Schiano said Ohio State expects more of the same from Rutgers.
 - “The screens were definitely an issue Saturday,” Schiano said. “They’ve been an issue going back to the Big Ten Championship Game. I think that’s kind of becoming a formula to try to go against the Silver Bullets. It’s, ‘How are we going to slow down the rush?’ So we’re going to have to adapt to that.”
- Schiano faces a former assistant of his in Rutgers offensive coordinator John McNulty, who worked on his staffs at Rutgers and with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.
 - “I think John’s an excellent football coach,” Schiano said of McNulty. “Really enjoyed working with him on both occasions. But when it comes down to competition, that’s what we do. That’s why we do this as coaches and players. For however long that game is Saturday, that friendship kind of sits on the back burner. It’s all about winning that football game. For our side, the doing the very best we can defensively and in the kicking game.”
- Outside of McNulty and freshman quarterback Artur Sitkowski, Schiano sees “pro football” and “NFL” in Rutgers’ offense.
 - “It’s motion and shift in every play, change in personnel groups, especially early in the game,” Schiano said. “If you look at last week’s game (against Texas State), especially in the first drive, they change personnel groups every play. That’s the NFL, right? It’s move, change personnel, shifts, motions, make you think right before the ball’s snapped. ... We’ve worked hard on that this week, but that’s different than what you generally see in college football nowadays.”
- Schiano, who was Rutgers’ head coach from 2001-11, reflected on how he rebuilt the program into a contender over the course of his years at the helm.
 - “It always comes down to players,” Schiano said. “When we arrived, it was some slim pickings. Thank goodness I was coming from the University of Miami. We were getting a lot of Florida kids at the time. If they didn’t go to the big three back then, they didn’t really care where they were going. They were going to go to the best place they could. So we were able to start the program on the back of a lot of Florida kids. As we got better, we were able to recruit our local area — New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania — and that’s where we really made our biggest improvement. But without those Florida kids early on, we would’ve never had a chance.”
- Schiano said Rutgers’ rise to the Big Ten was a goal he had from his start as head coach.
 - “I could never understand why it was always, ‘Rutgers can’t do it,’” Schiano said. “I never understood that. I mean, why can’t it? Every other state does it, why can’t we? So that was one of the reasons a lot of people told me I was crazy to take that job back in 2000, but that was one of the visions we had.”

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