

Short Yardage Shortcomings Disappointing To Day



By the end of the first quarter of action, Ohio State's issues converting third- and fourth-and-short had already arrived at the scene against Northwestern Nov. 5.

The Buckeyes failed to convert a third-and-1 at their own 34-yard-line, gaining 0 yards on a handoff to third-year running back Miyan Williams, just under nine minutes into play and punted the ball back to the Wildcats.

Facing another third-and-1 on its very next possession, OSU again handed the ball to Williams for no gain. It attempted to do the same on fourth-and-1 but was stopped short for a turnover on downs.

"Of all the things that I was disappointed with Saturday running the football, short yardage was the one that was high on the list," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said. "You know they're all going to be in there, and we've got to convert in those situations."

As Ohio State's running game in general has struggled over the past three contests, Day and company are taking special care to fix the team's efficiency in converting short-yardage situations. Doing so could be the difference between winning and losing as the competition gets tougher through November and the postseason.

"I think it was a combination of things," Day said. "There were multiple, and that hurt us on third down. But we didn't quite get the movement we wanted to. We didn't quite enter the blocks the right way. You'll see a couple of them where we're just not flush on the blocks. Then there's one scheme that we could have done a better job with, but overall it was just that (the defense) was down in there and we weren't getting enough movement. We've got to get our pads down lower, we've got to fit those blocks a little bit better."

There were some external factors affecting Ohio State as well.

Right guard Matthew Jones has dealt with some ailments, as have both starting running backs in Miyan

Williams and TreVeyon Henderson. Extreme wind gusts limited the Buckeyes' ability to throw the ball against Northwestern, meaning the Wildcats could load the box with extra defenders and focus on stopping the run. Day noted he doesn't want to make excuses, though.

"There's going to be conditions, there's going to be injuries, bumps and bruises, at the end of the day, we've got to go out there and produce," Day said. "That's the bottom line."

Ohio State has two more games, in truth, to tune up its short-yardage abilities before welcoming No. 3 Michigan to Ohio Stadium Nov. 26. A home matchup with Indiana and road trip to Maryland are the opportunities the Buckeyes have to set things straight.

Day is looking for improvement from the whole of his offense when it comes to gaining ground on the ground.

"Going back and watching the film, we've got to block better, we've got to run better, we've got to do a better job equating numbers, all of the above," Day said. "Certainly in games where they know you're going to run it, you have to come up with answers. But just moving forward in general, we know we can do a better job. So we'll get back to work this week and get after it."