

Three Questions Asked: Toledo



Ohio State will play its final tune-up game of the season against Toledo on Saturday before the Big Ten slate begins next week against Wisconsin.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin is taking a look at the biggest questions facing the Buckeyes for this night kickoff against the in-state Rockets.

1. Can the defense keep things rolling?

It was believed that Notre Dame would be one of the best offenses Ohio State faced this season, but it's now evident that the Irish - who have fallen to 0-2 and out of the AP Top 25 - were not on the same level as the Buckeyes.

Toledo could be in for a similar result against Ohio State, but there's reason to believe that the Rockets' offense could provide a better challenge for the Buckeyes' reworked defense that has allowed 11.0 points per game through the first two contests.

Quarterback Dequann Finn is solid both as a passer and in the rushing attack, and it's quarterbacks like Finn with a dual-threat capability that have given Ohio State pause in the past. This should be a significant test for defensive coordinator Jim Knowles' new defense.

2. Will Ohio State force a turnover?

After forcing 20 turnovers last season, Ohio State has yet to force a fumble or intercept a pass this year through two games.

It obviously is not an issue for the Buckeyes considering they are 2-0 over that stretch, but now is the time for the defense to begin making those plays if they expect to force turnovers against tougher competition later in the year.

"He's going to want some turnovers, and I think if our defensive line keeps playing like they are playing, guys are going to throw the ball and it's going to bring opportunities for turnovers," safety Tanner McCalister said. "We definitely work on it in practice, just punching at the ball, trying to get the ball out. I think they'll come, but yeah, I don't think Coach Knowles is too worried about it."

3. Will the offense get back to normal with Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Julian Fleming back?

Relatively speaking, Ohio State's offense has looked fine the last two games. The Buckeyes have passed for 296.5 yards per game and rushed for 170.0 per game, but there could be more in store.

Wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba and Julian Fleming (and potentially Kamryn Babb) are expected to take the field against Toledo, and it could add another dimension to Ohio State's offense that has still been solid through the first two games.

Sophomore wideouts Marvin Harrison Jr. and Emeka Egbuka have been more than effective in relief, but as Day said Thursday, "We're a different team when Jaxon's in there, there's no question."