

Welcome To Week 2: Youngstown State



It was a shaky start for Ohio State in the team's 23-3 win over Indiana to begin the season, but the next opponent should offer a chance to regroup and figure out how to get things in order.

Ohio State will open the home slate at Ohio Stadium on Saturday, set to host Youngstown State from the FCS ranks for a noon kickoff on the Big Ten Network. Check back every Monday at BuckeyeSports.com for a brief preview of the Buckeyes' upcoming opponent, with stories and features throughout the week.

OPPONENT: Youngstown State (7-4, 5-3 Missouri Valley Conference)

Youngstown State has yet to return to the heights that the program reached under former head coach Jim Tressel, winning four national titles from 1991-97, but current head coach Doug Phillips has engineered an impressive turnaround since taking the team over in 2020.

After going just 1-6 in his first season, he and the Penguins went 3-7 in 2021 before posting a 7-4 mark last year, the program's best record since Bo Pelini led the team to a winning record in 2017. Youngstown State came just short of making the program's first FCS playoff appearance since 2016, but Phillips is looking to finally cross that benchmark this season.

"We said it pregame," Phillips said after Youngstown State's 52-10 win over Valparaiso to begin the season. "This season started with Nov. 20 of last year) when we sat in that room and found out that we didn't make the playoffs."

The Penguins notched a dominant win over Valparaiso with 471 total yards of offense while allowing only 195 yards, but Ohio State will be an entirely different beast for Youngstown State, which is hoping to grow coming out of this upcoming matchup.

"We have 11 guaranteed games, and it starts this week," Phillips said prior to the opener. "There's no do-overs. You hope that the plan you put together is successful, and if there's mistakes in the plan, we'll find out and get hit in the face, and we'll adjust. We'll adapt, and we'll come out better the next week.

"That's what's been in our talks in our meetings. Everyone thinks it's X's and O's, but there's a bigger picture. I think that the bigger picture is growth, and it is the step that I'm hoping we take this year."

PLAYERS TO WATCH:

- LB Alex Howard – Howard helped lead Youngstown State’s defense to allow just 10 points and 195 total yards of offense against Valparaiso, posting a team-high nine tackles, three tackles for loss and a pair of sacks.
- SAF Marcus Hooker – Ohio State will see a familiar face in Hooker, who played in Columbus for four seasons before transferring to Youngstown State. He had 23 tackles and two interceptions last season, and had three tackles against Valparaiso.
- RB Dra Rushton – Rushton, who had 329 yards and a pair of touchdowns last season, is expected to be back on the field after missing YSU’s season-opener. He is part of a running back group – along with Tyshon King and Da’Shaun Whatley – that are looking to replace McLaughlin.

GAME INFO: Ohio Stadium, 12 p.m., Big Ten Network

This contest will begin the 101st season of football at Ohio Stadium, with the stadium hosting Ohio State football since 1922. The Buckeyes won their home opener last season against Notre Dame but suffered a loss to Oregon in 2021, and since 2000, Ohio State holds a 20-3 record in home openers, with losses to Oregon as well as Oklahoma in 2017 and Virginia Tech in 2014.

SERIES HISTORY: This will be just the third meeting between Ohio State and Youngstown State, with the Buckeyes holding a 2-0 lead in the series. The previous matchups have been a 43-0 win on Aug. 30, 2008, and a 38-6 win on Sept. 1, 2007.

That 2007 matchup was the first time Ohio State had faced an FCS opponent since a 12-6 win at Pennsylvania on Oct. 17, 1953. Since that time, the Buckeyes have only played three games against FCS competition – the aforementioned wins over Youngstown State, as well as a 76-0 win over Florida A&M on Sept. 21, 2013.

Date	Opponent	Location	Time/Result	TV/Streaming
Sept. 2	at Indiana	Bloomington, Ind.	W, 23-3	CBS
Sept. 9	Youngstown State	Columbus	W, 35-7	BTN
Sept. 16	Western Kentucky	Columbus	W, 63-10	FOX
Sept. 23	at Notre Dame	South Bend, Ind.	W, 17-14	NBC/Peacock
Oct. 7	Maryland	Columbus	W, 37-17	FOX
Oct. 14	at Purdue	West Lafayette, Ind.	W, 41-7	Peacock
Oct. 21	Penn State	Columbus	W, 20-12	FOX
Oct. 28	at Wisconsin	Madison, Wisc.	W, 24-10	NBC
Nov. 4	at Rutgers	Piscataway, N.J.	W, 35-16	CBS
Nov. 11	Michigan State	Columbus	W, 38-3	NBC/Peacock
Nov. 18	Minnesota	Columbus	W, 37-3	BTN
Nov. 25	at Michigan	Ann Arbor, Mich.	L, 30-24	FOX
Dec. 29	Cotton Bowl vs. Missouri	Arlington, Texas	L, 14-3	ESPN