

What We Learned From Ohio State's 28-23 Win Over Washington in the 2019 Rose Bowl



PASADENA, Calif. - The 2019 Rose Bowl Game had plenty of intrigue outside of the contest, let alone once the ball was kicked.

The Buckeyes came away with a convincing, then not so convincing 28-23 win over Washington on New Year's Day, as Ohio State took a 28-3 lead before holding off a late Husky run in the fourth quarter.

Urban Meyer walked off into the sunset while Ryan Day prepared to take the reins of the program, but there was still more to take away from the bowl victory than just the big picture.

1. Jeffrey Okudah is a Star in The Making

A year ago at the Cotton Bowl, Okudah was thrust into a key role when Denzel Ward sat out against USC. In this season's bowl game, the sophomore corner played perhaps his best game as a Buckeye.

Officially, Okudah tallied a pair of pass breakups and five tackles against the Huskies while the Buckeye defense limited Washington to just three points until the fourth quarter.

With Damon Arnette and Kendall Sheffield potentially gone to the NFL, Okudah proved that he can be Ohio State's No. 1 corner next season should both of the veteran corners decide to bolt for the next level.

2. Joshua Alabi Worthy of a Starting Role

With Thayer Munford out with an undisclosed injury, Ohio State turned to junior Joshua Alabi at left tackle and the Buckeye offense didn't seem any worse for wear.

The Buckeye offense flourished, at least until the fourth quarter, with Alabi in arguably the most important position on the offensive line for a pocket passer at QB, and performed admirably.

With right tackle Isaiah Prince lost to graduation, there will be a spot up for grabs in the offseason.

With the way he has performed in spot duty this year, Alabi has earned to the right to get the first crack at the job.

3. Defensive Line Primed For Elite 2019 Season

Ohio State is set to lose Dre'Mont Jones to the NFL, but with Chase Young coming back along with Robert Landers, Johnathon Cooper and others, the Buckeyes appear primed to have another stellar crew up front in 2019.

The Buckeyes played a number of young players added reps against Washington, including Tyreke Smith and Haskell Garrett getting more run than usual. Throw Zach Harrison into the mix for next year, and Larry Johnson's crew could be better than ever in 2019.

4. Mike Weber, Parris Campbell Improved Draft Stock

Both players came back after the 2017 season to make sure they improved their draft stock, and both players did so in a big way, especially against the Huskies.

Weber fell just short of 100 yards in the Rose Bowl, carrying 15 times for 96 yards and on arguably college football's biggest stage he looked every bit the part of an NFL running back against Washington.

Campbell needed to prove in 2018 that he could be an all-around receiver and might have done just that. While his downfield ability in terms of tracking the ball in the air may still need work, he proved he can be an elite route runner and reliable receiver over the middle. His tremendous speed will make him a high round draft pick and if he can establish himself as a deep threat, his 2018 season might have made him a lot of money.

5. The Rose Bowl Still Matters, Even When It's Not a Playoff Game

Many people nowadays say that bowl games outside of the College Football Playoff are meaningless, and for the most part, they are right. As a fan or media member, bowl games are just exhibitions. For coaches it's a chance for extra practice time. For players, it's one last chance to play with your teammates you've become so close with over the course of four or five years.

The Rose Bowl brings out everything that is great in college football. From the San Gabriel mountains, to the marching bands not having to worry about getting drowned out by piped in music. The best part is, while that might be lost on some, it wasn't lost on Ohio State or Washington.

No players sat out. No one mailed it in. This game meant something to both teams. Don't believe it? Try telling that to the guys who lost, and what they would give for a second chance at winning a Rose Bowl.

Other bowl games might seem hollow and meaningless, but when you walk into the Rose Bowl on New Years Day, you know it means something more and it's a reminder of why college football is great.

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