- Saturday, September 29, 2012

- Spartan Stadium - East Lansing, MI

- Ohio State at Michigan State

- 3:30 p.m. (ET)

- TV: ABC -

The No. 14 Ohio State Buckeyes hit the road for the first time this year for a battle against the No. 20 Michigan State Spartans. ESPN's college gameday will also invade East Lansing as this Big Ten opener features the conference's highest ranked teams.

The Buckeyes have dominated Sparty recently winning seven of the last eight matchups, but Michigan State got the best of Ohio State last year in an ugly 10-7 loss in Columbus.

Ohio State comes into the game a perfect 4-0 after defeating a surprisingly plucky UAB team 29-15 last week. Michigan State's lone blemish came two weeks ago with a 21-3 loss to Notre Dame, and the Spartans hold a 3-1 record entering conference play.

State of the Bucks

Ohio State is getting a little healthier this week, and it couldn't have come at a better time.

After spraining his MCL in Ohio State's Week 2 victory UCF, Carlos Hyde will return to the

backfield behind starting running back Jordan Hall.

Hyde will likely back up Hall and get the short yardage carries as he eases back into the rotation. Meyer says Hyde will wear a brace on the knee he injured two weeks ago for extra support.

Also back from injury is starting cornerback Bradley Roby. Meyer listed Roby as probable for the Michigan State game, but if he needs to sit, backup Doran Grant will step in.

Michael Bennett, one of Ohio State's most talented defensive lineman, has yet to play in a game due to a nagging groin injury. Meyer also expects Bennett to be available, but his playing time will be determined with he responds to game action.

C.J. Barnett -- who missed the UAB game with an ankle injury -- is the only starter who is listed as questionable for the Michigan State game.

Michigan State: Key Personnel

The Spartans have the most productive running back in the conference in Le'Veon Bell.

The junior running back is averaging 152 yards per game (third best in the nation) and has five touchdowns on the year. Last week against Eastern Michigan, Bell carried the ball 36 times for 253 yards. That eclipsed his season-opening performance when he rushed for 210 yards and two touchdowns against Boise State.

Spartans quarterback Andrew Maxwell has had a rough start to the year, completing just 57 percent of his passes through four games. Maxwell hasn't had much support from his wide receiver core, a group that's replacing three multi-year starters in B.J. Cunningham, Keshawn Martin, and Keith Nichol.

Michigan State has some fantastic players on the other side of the ball, which is mainly why they're ranked No. 6 in total defense.

William Gholston -- cousin of former Buckeye great Vernon Gholston -- is a star defensive end for the Spartans. Gholston is a fierce pass rusher and creates havoc for a very good defensive line.

Cornerback Johnny Adams is the best defensive back in the conference and an All-American candidate for the Spartans. Adams can lock down an opponent's best receiver with ease.

Idle Speculation

For Ohio State to win:

The Buckeyes will need Braxton Miller's best performance against the best defense in the Big Ten. The Spartans are equally stout defending the run and the pass, so Miller will need to keep this defense off balance by executing the zone-read play effectively and throwing accurately downfield.

For Michigan State to win:

The Spartans will need to get some rhythm going in the passing game to open some holes for Le'Veon Bell. Meyer said the Buckeyes will play a little more press coverage against the Spartans to be able to put an extra defender in the box, so Maxwell will need to make Ohio State pay for that.

Prediction:

Ohio State 20, Michigan State 17

(Photo credit - Dan Harker - TheOzone.net)

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