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UCF Knights face tall task against No. 5 Michigan

Tim Briggs Updated Sep 12, 2016



Paige Wilson

UCF head coach Scott Frost eyes the field intently prior to a 38-0 victory over South Carolina State in week one. Frost and the Knight travel to battle with No. 5 Michigan on Saturday.

After its first win in almost two years, UCF now sets its sights on one of the traditional powers in college football in week two of the season — Michigan.

The Knights shut out South Carolina State in a 38-0 rout of the Bulldogs last Saturday. But the Wolverines decimated Hawaii on their way to a 63-3 thrashing in their first game.

As a result, Michigan moved up to No. 5 in the newest AP poll. The last time that UCF played a top-five team in the rankings was Baylor in the 2014 Fiesta Bowl, a game that UCF won 52-42.

“It’s a big test for us,” head coach Scott Frost said. “We’re getting some momentum now. We’re a lot better team now coming off a win and now we go play a real team. If nothing else this will be a good lesson about how precise and exact you have to be in your execution to make things work against a team like this.”

Brothers Shaquill and Shaquem Griffin were the defensive standouts against SCST as Shaquill nabbed an interception and Shaquem collected six tackles, a sack and a forced fumble.

They and the entire “UCFierce” crew will have their hands full against mighty Michigan Saturday. Running back Chris Evans rushed for 112 yards and a touchdown against Hawaii on just eight carries, and the Wolverines rushed for 306 total yards as a team in their opener, with ten players getting at least one carry.

“Our plan is to start fast, end fast,” senior defensive back Shaquill Griffin said. “Mistakes are going to happen, but it’s how you react to it. We understand the team that we’re going against and we’re taking it very seriously. We’re going to face each team like it’s the national championship.”

The Knights also displayed some offensive firepower in week one as they ran 91 plays and scored 38 points against South Carolina State even with a sluggish first half from quarterback Justin Holman.

True freshman running back Jawon Hamilton got the start in week one and coach Frost didn’t say whether or not he would against the Wolverines. He finished with 53 rushing yards on 14 carries. Dontravious Wilson, Taj McGowan and Adrian Killins are also all in the mix for carries as UCF figures out which player will stand out in the early going.

Michigan’s defense is rife with ferocious players that will fly all over the field in an attempt to force UCF’s up-tempo offense into a lull.

Linebacker Jabrill Peppers and cornerback Jourdan Lewis were both preseason All-Americans and players like outside linebacker Mike McCray display elite pass rushing skills. McCray collected two sacks and three-and-a-half tackles for loss in Michigan's week one victory.

"I'm looking forward to it a lot," wide receiver Tre'Quan Smith said. "It's going to be a big crowd, and our team is a brotherhood and we stick together. I'm looking forward to big things this Saturday."

With a capacity of 109,901, Michigan Stadium, or more commonly referred to as the "Big House," is one of the truly iconic locales in college football. The largest crowd that UCF has played in front was 104,745 during a 2012 matchup at Ohio State.

As a 34.5 point underdog, UCF face the same exact odds that Hawaii had last week, and a challenge unlike any they will face this season. Michigan is slated as the highest ranked team that UCF will play this season, followed closely by No. 6 Houston.

"I love being the underdog," Shaquill said. "Our whole thing is just do your job, focus on your job and do it 100 percent. I want to do things that will silence their crowd. Coming into a game like this there's isn't anything better and it's what you live for."

UCF and Michigan will kick off at noon on ABC.