

# Buckeyes Defense Ready To Prove Doubters Wrong On Saturday



For defensive coordinator Jim Knowles and his unit, the late-season miscues of Ohio State’s defense — specifically the explosive plays they relinquished against Michigan and Georgia — have been well-documented throughout the summer. With questions and criticisms swirling around the defense all offseason, the unit is poised to use their past mistakes as motivation as they begin their 2023 journey at Memorial Stadium on Saturday.

“I mean, we’re just playing with a chip on our shoulder,” safety Lathan Ransom said on Wednesday. “A lot of people outside of the (Woody Hayes Athletic Center) have a lot of stuff to say, so we’re excited for a new challenge and excited to go play.”

“Just to see how close we got last year it’s just you got to feed off that fire,” defensive tackle Michael Hall Jr. added. “We made it so far, so why throw the towel in, (why) get discouraged? So we should just use that as fuel to the fire and just try to be the best that we can this year and win the whole thing.”

Hall, who proclaimed that he is fully healthy this year after an injury-riddled sophomore campaign, said he and his defensive teammates entered the offseason with a heightened intensity and focus, something that was previously lacking in past seasons. The junior defensive tackle added that this change in mentality was present from day one of the 2023 offseason.

“(We were) taking it seriously, holding our guys accountable,” Hall said. “Just really not letting things fly that we used to let fly before. I can tell in this group that from the first day of the offseason, we took things seriously and we handled business.”

Aside from the added accountability, the Buckeyes’ defense also gained a greater feeling of comfort with one another in year two of Knowles’ 4-2-5 system. According to Ransom, who is slated to start at free safety this season, the togetherness of the unit has progressively developed throughout the spring and summer, allowing them to play with more freedom and confidence.

“This is the first time I’ve been here since (I’ve had the same) scheme two years in a row,” Ransom said. “I think (that is the same) for a lot of dudes. Coming into (this season), we have a lot of veterans, we have a lot of leadership on the defense. And all of us, we played together a whole year now, we know what each other likes to do, and we’re comfortable playing with each other. I think we’re just excited,

really excited, to show we can do just two years in the same system.”

Coming into the season-opener against Indiana with an improved familiarity of the system and a clear message to prove, the Ohio State defense is eager to leave the practice field for some time and take on a new opposing offense on Saturday — where they can begin to right the wrongs from 2022.

“I think we’re all excited, man,” Ransom said. “We’ve been banging against each other all camp. It’s been a long month. And I think we can’t wait to play somebody else.”