

Defensive Observations From Fall Camp: Jack Sawyer Leads Strong Defensive Effort In Practice Seven



In a three-hour practice on day seven of fall camp, Ohio State's defense had another standout performance. The Buckeyes' defensive pressure was led by senior defensive end Jack Sawyer, who made several plays both rushing the passer and in the run game. Sawyer made easy work of an offensive line hampered by what head coach Ryan Day described as a 'funky virus.'

Sawyer was joined by many of the usual first-team defenders including safeties Lathan Ransom and Caleb Downs, cornerbacks Denzel Burke and Davison Igbinosun and perhaps more so than some of the other practices, a very even split of reps between linebackers Sonny Styles and C.J. Hicks.

Sawyer and the first team-defense might have had their best moments defending the Buckeyes' rushing attack in the goal-line drill. Defending the run, Sawyer had a tackle after a short gain from Treveyon Henderson and then a tackle for loss just two plays later on Henderson. Ohio State's goal-line package had a formation of 4-3, rather than the typical 4-2-5 look, it has shown throughout camp. The Buckeyes' 4-3 defense had Hicks at Will linebacker and Arvell Reese at Mike Linebacker, with Styles serving as the third hybrid linebacker lined up more towards the line of scrimmage.

The Buckeyes' pass-defense also had plenty of highlight plays. Going up against Will Howard in 11-on-11, Burke was able to undercut a ball thrown from the right hash all the way to the left sideline. Burke made the grab to intercept the frontrunner for the starting quarterback job.

Also in the 7-on-7 drill, Howard faced pressure in the pocket and just as he attempted to escape and scramble for yardage, Sawyer stopped Howard in his tracks for a sack.

After a long completion from quarterback Devin Brown, Caden Curry helped the defense bounce back with a sack on the next play.

In the secondary, plenty of Buckeyes made nice plays to disrupt the rhythm from the passing attack. In the 7-on-7 drill, Igbinosun guarded former five-star receiver Jeremiah Smith in the red zone and broke up a goal line fade to the back corner of the end zone. Igbinosun stood over the freshman receiver and made sure to let Smith know of his accomplishment before moving on to the next play.

In a 2nd-and-long and 3rd-and-long drill, the Ohio State defense routinely forced incompletions from both Howard and Brown. In a 3rd-and-long situation, Howard wasn't able to find receiver Emeka Egbuka over the middle, as his pass was broken up by junior cornerback Jordan Hancock. The Buckeye secondary forced Brown, who had a very strong day overall, into just two completions in six pass attempts.

Still, Ohio State's defense wasn't without its faults. In multiple instances in quicker two-minute drills against the two or threes of the defense, quarterbacks Julian Sayin and Lincoln Kienholz went on lengthy touchdown drives, converting 4th-and-long plays in both instances during the last plays of the drill.

Regardless of the feats of Sayin and Kienholz in two-minute drills, the big winners of day seven seemed to be the first-team defense, which routinely disrupted a consistent rhythm from Howard and his teammates.

Ohio State's seventh fall practice did not come without an injury on defense, though, as defensive end Kenyatta Jackson went down with what appeared to be a left foot ailment towards the end of the practice. Jackson, who has seen some first-team reps this camp at the edge, was injured after going up against a Buckeye offensive lineman during a one-on-one "teach" session, falling down to the ground and staying down for an extended time with his head hunched over on the turf.

An obviously in pain Jackson was consoled by some of his teammates on the ground before trainers appeared to stretch out his left foot and eventually get the defensive end up, where he gingerly walked to the sideline and watched the rest of practice.

Day did not offer any update on Jackson after the practice.