

# Jonathon Cooper's Service Trip "Changed My Perspective"



Ohio State senior defensive end Jonathon Cooper (6-4, 257) enters his final season for the Scarlet and Gray with high expectations.

As a junior, the Gahanna (Ohio) Lincoln product earned honorable mention All-Big Ten honors with 25 tackles (14 solo), 6.5 tackles for loss, three sacks, one fumble recovery and one blocked extra-point attempt.

Cooper has impressed first-year head coach Ryan Day both on and off the field, which is part of the reason he brought him to Big Ten Media Days in Chicago.

"Jonathon Cooper, defensive end for us, senior who's played a lot of football for us. He is the epitome of what it means to be a Buckeye," Day said of Cooper. "He's a tremendous young man."

In addition to his success on the field, Cooper earned academic All-Big Ten accolades as a junior and as a sophomore.

Beyond the field and the classroom, Cooper is committed to helping others.

Cooper joined fourteen other Ohio State student-athletes and three staff members on a trip to Costa Rica for the Buckeyes Go International service-learning program in May.

The Department of Athletics and the Student Athlete Support Services Office (SASSO) partnered with Student-Athletes Abroad for the first time. Student-Athletes Abroad's stated mission is to "offer international education programs designed to remove barriers that typically prevent student-athletes from studying or interning abroad while using sports as a vehicle to increase cultural immersion and maximize educational opportunities."

Ohio State student-athletes facilitated sports activities with local youth, served at a food bank, and participated in a beach clean-up while participating in other service projects. The Buckeyes also participated in a variety of cultural immersion activities and educational opportunities.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin asked Cooper about his service experience in Costa Rica, and the 6-foot-4 defensive end beamed when talking about the eye-opening trip.

“That was great. It changed my perspective a lot,” Cooper told BSB. “It was a seven-day mission trip. We cleaned up beaches. We played with kids. We were teaching kids English. We were just seeing how happy these kids were. You see how much we take for granted here.

“It made me realize you don’t need that many things to be happy. It was probably the best trip I’ve taken in my life. The power went out every night where I was staying. It wasn’t like we were staying at a fancy resort with a pool or near the beach.

“There is so little that you need to be happy. I was very happy on that trip. I just loved playing with those little kids. They didn’t have shoes on their feet. They were wearing the same clothes they wore yesterday. You saw how genuinely happy they were. It meant the world. I can’t wait to do something like that again.”

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