

Josh Proctor To Remain Starter At Adjuster Safety



Ohio State head coach Ryan Day and defensive coordinator Jim Knowles indicated on Tuesday that graduate safety Josh Proctor will serve as the team's starting adjuster/free safety moving forward, citing his experience and quality play as key factors behind the decision.

"Josh, right now, has earned the right on the field to be the starter," Day said.

"He has some plays underneath him, so we went with him," Knowles said. "And I thought he played well (on Saturday). He showed up."

Proctor was entrenched in a tight competition for the position throughout fall camp with freshman Malik Hartford and Syracuse transfer Ja'Had Carter, but he manned the starting role during the first half of the Buckeyes' season-opening 23-3 victory against Indiana, recording four total tackles and a tackle for loss. The sixth-year defender's presence was felt mostly against the run, where he delivered a pair of bruising hits against the Hoosiers' triple-option attack, including one in the first quarter that resulted in a three-yard loss.

Proctor's impact would dissipate in the second half when he was replaced at the position by Hartford, but Day said his veteran presence and dependability he showed both during the game and at fall camp earned him the starting role.

"He's been consistent," Day said. And that's something that's always been a focus for Josh, is his consistency. No one ever really questioned his effort. And so he needs to be a major contributor for us. He needs to be consistent. Somebody who's been in the program as long as he has, that's what he needs to bring. He's played a lot of football games when you think back on it when he was young. So we need that, and Malik and Ja'Had will also be back there at the position...But we need (Proctor) to be consistent and we need him to be a veteran guy, and he showed up. He graded out a champion, and played well."

Knowles, who admitted it is "tough" to make a decision on whether to start Proctor, Hartford or Carter at the adjuster, said the sixth-year Buckeye separated himself from the others towards the end of fall camp with his play and steady approach. This, along with his rich collegiate experience, allowed the defensive coordinator to extend the veteran first-team reps against Indiana and beyond.

“We have always had high hopes for him,” Knowles said. “(He’s) talented, (we’re) looking for that consistency, like (Day) talked about. And he showed that towards the end of our preseason work.”

“You just evaluate all the plays, all the reps,” he added. “(I) thought it was close between Josh and Malik, but Josh has some plays underneath him. So for our first game, we thought it’d be better to go that way, but still get Malik in the game. It’s hard to play these guys in a tightly-contested game.”

Despite indicating that Proctor will serve as his defense’s starting adjuster moving forward, Knowles said that the sixth-year must continue to show that he is worthy of the role this season — starting this week during practice.

“I mean, it looks (like he will start),” Knowles said. “It’ll continue to be highly contested. So you have to earn it every week when you’re in one of those situations. You really have to evaluate in practice.”