

Lathan Ransom, Sonny Styles Taking Hold At Safety



Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles provided some clarity on how the safety positional battles are shaping out Monday afternoon at the Woody Hayes Center, stating that the all-but-one position is still up for grabs.

Knowles informed the media audience that second-year Buckeye Sonny Styles has earned his spot as a starting safety in his 4-2-5 defense this season, as he has separated himself from the pack with his unique versatility throughout fall camp.

“Sonny has (solidified himself as a starter),” Knowles said Monday. “Sonny is, he’s definitely a guy we’re going to have on the field as much as we can. He can match up to both 11 and 12 personnel. When people bring in two tight ends, he gives us a lot more versatility.”

Styles, who played the most snaps of all true Ohio State freshman in 2022 with 280 as a 17-year-old, is expected to assume the nickel role for the majority of the season. However, both he and Knowles have expressed interest in the Pickerington, Ohio native playing a number of different positions throughout the year. In the two fall practices that were made available to the media, Styles also lined up at the adjuster/free safety and bandit/strong safety roles.

“We know exactly what we want to do with him,” safeties coach Perry Eliano said on Aug. 8 “We’ve created a great plan for him. We’ve thought it through. And we’re excited about what it’s going to look like.”

“My favorite thing is making plays in multiple slots,” Styles said on Aug. 8. “Going from the half, to being in the box, to playing the middle of the field, to playing man-to-man, to be able to do it all.”

While Knowles solidified Styles as a defensive starter, he also recognized senior Lathan Ransom as the team’s starting high.strong safety. Lathan primarily served as the bandit in the 2022 season, where he started nine games and ranked third on the team in tackles with 74.

“In that high safety area, you’re looking at Lathan for sure,” Knowles said. “He’s had a great camp, a great spring.”

Although Knowles had said after the first fall practice that Syracuse transfer safety Ja’Had Carter had

assumed the starting adjuster/free safety role, he assured the media on Monday that the starting job has not yet been solidified. The Buckeyes' defensive play caller mentioned senior Josh Proctor, who started four games at safety last year and accumulated 21 tackles, and freshman Malik Harford, who comes to Ohio State as the No. 4 overall player in Ohio for the 2023 class.

"Ja'Had's doing well, (he's) been banged up a little bit," Knowles said. "And then you're looking at Proctor and Malik and Ja'Had. Really those three are fighting it out for that other position. And between the three of them, they'll play there and also back up Lathan. But there's very much a competition still going on for that spot."