

Knowles Recognizes Toughness Of Ohio State Defense



It's no secret that Ohio State's offense hasn't been as good as it usually has been in years past, but nevertheless the Buckeyes are off to an 8-0 start and that is largely due to the top defense they have put on the field this year, allowing only 10 points per game, which is second in the country behind only Michigan (5.9).

Defensive coordinator is a big reason for that, and the players have said as much, but Knowles also thinks it is due to the toughness of the defensive players and how much work they have committed to the plan he has put together.

"We always talk about our honor defend," he said. "Defending our team, defending our fan base defending all that work, because they put in so much work. People don't even know, they put in so much work. Say what you want, but these guys work 365 days a year. Then you get these limited number of games. The extra toughness for them comes from the brotherhood, and it's like, 'Hey, we put all this work in, now it's our job to defend it.' "

And that approach has worked for the Buckeyes defense. In two games against top 10 teams, they have allowed a combined 26 points (13 points per game), when last season in the three games they played against Penn State, Michigan and Georgia, they allowed a total of 118 points, or 39.3 per game.

He said that toughness on defense is necessary because the only ways to get them off the field and the ball back in the hands of the offense is to either make stops or allow the other team to score. They have no other choice than to fully commit to making hits.

"I always joke with offensive coaches," Knowles said. "You can't punt on defense. You can't say, 'Hey, we don't want to play anymore. Can we get off the field?' You can't do that. You have to stop them. That's what I told him before every game is somebody has to make the tackle. Somebody has to put the other guy on the ground. There's just a toughness that comes with that."

Despite just a 40th ranked total offense, much less than what Ryan Day is used to having on that side of the ball, the Buckeyes have been able to trouble opposing offenses enough to avoid losses with the best résumé in the country, earning them the No. 1 spot in the first College Football Playoff Rankings.