

Knowles “Safety Driven Defense” Coming To Fruition



The Ohio State defense is third in the country in scoring with only 10 points allowed per game and sixth in passing defense with only 159.6 yards allowed through the air per game. Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles' second year with the program has been a complete turnaround from what happened at the end of last season, giving up 30, 45 and 42 points in its last three games.

The change comes from Knowles changing his philosophy to not wanting to allow explosive plays, something the Buckeyes have been one of the most successful teams in the country at accomplishing. After seven games, they are one of only three teams that haven't allowed a single play for 40 or more yards.

Knowles said he wanted this to be a safety driven defense, and he believes that has started to come to fruition the past few weeks.

"You're starting to see that," he said. "You start to see safety show up in different places and making plays at critical times. And that's just an understanding of the system and how they can make plays."

Safety Josh Proctor, who has been at Ohio State since 2018 has been a big part of the defense becoming what Knowles expected that it could be going into this year. After five seasons before this year, Knowles said he thinks everything is finally starting to come together for Proctor.

"Josh has been through a lot of ups and downs in life, in general," Knowles said. "I think that's why I've always coached college and want to continue to coach college because, he's just one of those guys - sometimes it takes them three (years), some four some five, some six - but eventually, you get to see the light bulb come on, and like everything starts to go right."

Proctor said he and the other safeties work hard to make sure the defense can be driven by them.

"We embrace it," he said. "It takes a smart group to get back there and run the defense like we do, but we embrace it. We study constantly we're always in here watching film trying to get better so I think we hit something that we started to look forward to this year as we took this role."

He also believes that being in Knowles' system now for two years has helped the entire defense get better, something that has been echoed by just about everyone on that side of the ball, and by Knowles himself.

We just get it more," Proctor said. "We've been in the scheme two years, and we understand the ins and outs. We understand what Coach Knowles wants to see and what we want to get out of it on defense on that play."