

# Lorenzo Styles Jr. Looking Forward To Matchup Against Former Team In CFP Title Game



Ohio State's national championship game matchup against Notre Dame on Monday night will be a special one for many on both sides, as in several cases it is the pinnacle of these players and coaches' careers.

But Monday night may be extra special for one player representing the Scarlet and Gray, that being cornerback Lorenzo Styles Jr. In addition to having the opportunity to win a championship alongside his younger brother, standout Buckeye linebacker Sonny Styles, the title game will also be a reunion for the older Styles brother, who played two seasons with Notre Dame as a wide receiver from 2021-22, combining for 684 receiving yards and two touchdowns in his career with the Irish.

Styles has already made an imprint on this historic rivalry during his time with the Fighting Irish when he hauled in a 54-yard reception on the very first play of the two teams' 2022 season opener in Columbus, a play that OSU defensive coordinator Jim Knowles remembers fondly due to it being his first ever play-call as a Buckeye.

"I don't remember all the plays, but I remember that one," Knowles said on Tuesday. "We hit the quarterback right in his face and then missed a tackle, and (Styles) went a long ways."

Nearly 870 days after that big gain, Styles will be looking to make another memory in this powerhouse matchup, this time for the Scarlet and Gray with a chance at a national title on the line.

"Clearly, I picked good schools," Styles joked on Wednesday about his time with both the Buckeyes and Irish. "But I'm excited to play with some of those guys. I have a lot of respect for that program. I have a lot of respect for Coach (Marcus) Freeman. I'm just excited for this matchup overall."

Styles, who joined the Buckeyes in 2023, did not record a statistic for Ohio State in last years' thrilling win against the Fighting Irish, but he may play more of a role in this matchup because his game has seen significant improvements since his junior campaign.

The Pickerington Central product has become a key member of both Ohio State's defense and special

teams this season, leading the team with 232 special teams snaps while also serving as a sixth defensive back in secondary-heavy defensive packages this season, recording 14 tackles and four pass breakups while on the field for either unit.

Styles said his increased production this season stems from him both being more passionate about the game of football and gaining more reps on defense as his career has progressed in Columbus, a development that has allowed him to be more versatile and effective in his role.

“I would have to say at first, I have to credit a lot to my teammates and just getting closer to the team,” Styles said “I’ve been growing more passionate about the game, just who I’m playing for and why I’m really doing it. But my overall skill set, getting some of that gameplay, I get to really just match the speed of the game. I’ve played against a bunch of different receivers from different schools, different body types, statures and things like that. (I’ve been able to) be more dynamic, blitz and do more things of that nature.”

As for the upcoming game against his former team, Styles said that while he has a lot of respect and admiration for the culture Freeman has been able to build in South Bend, Ind., he hasn’t spent much time reconnecting with his former Irish teammates as the game inches nearer.

“I did talk to them, but those conversations were short-lived,” Styles said. “I told them I can’t be talking to the enemy for too long.”

Instead, he’s focused on winning what he thinks will be a tight, back-and-forth battle with the Irish and doing whatever he can to help bring a national title to his hometown program alongside his older brother.

“Going against some of the guys in those one-on-one matchups in this game’s kind of like that tug-of-war,” Styles said in reference to a tug-of-war drill Notre Dame incorporated into its offseason workouts while he was there. “There’s going to be some momentum swings, and when they blow the whistle out there, we’ve got to make sure we’re pulling it to our side.”