

Ohio State Defense Looking For More After First Shutout Since 2019



It had been five years to the day that Ohio State last had shutout a team, and the defense was aware of it. Linebacker Sonny Styles said that Cody Simon let him know after the game that Sept. 7, 2019, was the last time the Buckeyes had done so when they blanked Luke Fickell's Cincinnati 42-0.

"I didn't even realize it was 2019. I was surprised," Styles said. "Cody told me right after the game. It definitely feels good. With the defense we have, we should have more shutouts."

Shutting out their opponents has been the goal for Ohio State every single game, as it likely is for every defense. The difference is that it's a realistic hope for the Buckeyes every time they step onto the field with the defense they have.

"We were trying — even last year, that was our goal," Simon said. "We're always trying to get a shutout, and it hurts when you let up anything. But I think it's a great goal for us to have. We want to dominate. We know the end goal in mind, the goal right now is not to just win game two. We want to get to the end and win everything. So that standard that we set right now is super important for that."

Last season, if the goal was to hold other teams to zero, the defense left disappointed many different times. The zero on the scoreboard was an elusive number, with all three of Indiana, Michigan State and Minnesota only able to put a field goal through the goalposts when they played against Ohio State's strong defense. But they were still able to score.

Then on Aug. 31, Akron opened up the scoring with a field goal, but the Zips were only able to score six points the entire game. There were many times they were well within reach.

In a game like they played last weekend, Styles understands that it doesn't just rely on the starters to get that shutout, but the players who came in down the depth chart when it was a blowout as well. He said everyone on the field deserves credit for finally achieving the feat.

"It definitely feels good. It's a goal for us as a defense every game," Styles said. "That takes all 11, whoever is out there the entire game. We get up by 40, some of the younger guys get in, they score a field goal, the shutout is done. So I think that goes to show how good our depth is. Everyone that comes

in the game is ready to play.”

But now that they have had a taste of one game with a goose egg on the scoreboard for the opposing team, the Buckeyes are already hungry for more.

“We’ve been talking about it for four years now, trying to chase that,” Simon said. “And to finally get it, now we just want to get another.”

After playing two MAC teams to begin the season, the schedule is only going to get tougher for Ohio State, with games like No. 9 Oregon on Oct. 12 and both of No. 8 Penn State and archrival No. 17 Michigan in the month of November. It’s going to be tough for them to blank another team, but they did come close a few times last season, and defensive end Jack Sawyer said that’s always going to be the aim.

“It’s something that we’re chasing week in and week out,” he said. “And we think that we’ve got the guys - we know we’ve got the guys to do it.”

Simon thinks the area to improve to make that happen is with turnovers, which the Buckeyes forced none of despite the dominant performance on defense.

“We’re going to watch the film when we get back,” Simon said after the game. “There’s always room to improve and there’s definitely areas for more opportunities for turnovers. We’ve got to be more detailed in that. I think that’s going to be the next step for us. Last week, we got a bunch of turnovers, but for two weeks, we’ve got to (have a) big focus on that and try to get the ball out.”