

# Ohio State Freshman Linebacker Payton Pierce Loses Black Stripe



Ohio State true freshman linebacker Payton Pierce became the latest Buckeye to “officially” join the team Tuesday when he shed his black stripe after the team’s 11th fall camp practice.

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Welcome the Hard hitting Texas Native @payton\_pierce26 to the Brotherhood □  
[pic.twitter.com/hbhQdEv3Vx](https://pic.twitter.com/hbhQdEv3Vx)

— Ohio State Football (@OhioStateFB) August 13, 2024

Pierce becomes the sixth freshman to receive the distinction and the fourth this fall, joining defensive end Eddrick Houston (Aug. 9), safety Jalyen McClain (Aug. 7), running back James Peoples (Aug. 9), quarterback Julian Sayin (April 8) and wide receiver Jeremiah Smith (March 21).

Pierce, a former four-star prospect out of Lucas (Texas) Lovejoy, joined the program as an early enrollee in January but was unable to practice with the team while rehabbing an injury. Now fully recovered, the linebacker has turned heads in fall camp, specifically due to his ability to quickly learn the system and play at multiple different positions.

“I think a guy who can handle multiple positions mentally is Payton Pierce,” linebackers coach James Laurinaitis said last week. “I think Payton has done a nice job being at Will but he also understands conceptually kind of the defense. He’s not behind at all (after the injury).”

“The thing you notice from Payton day one is that he was going to come downhill and he’s very natural in the box. He has an understanding for blocking schemes and how to fall back on certain gaps and is just a very natural, smart, tough football player.”

Pierce, who has mostly lined up at Will linebacker this fall camp behind juniors C.J. Hicks and Sonny

Styles on the depth chart, is unlikely to see much playing time on Jim Knowles' defense this season, but he could find himself on the field on special teams if he continues to produce.