

# Ohio State Junior Linebacker Sonny Styles Named To Butkus Award Watch List



Ohio State junior linebacker Sonny Styles was named one of 15 finalists for the Butkus Award for the nation's top linebacker, the Butkus Foundation announced on Monday.

6 is a Butkus Award Semifinalist | @sonnystyles\_ pic.twitter.com/hL7TwLsvt5

— Ohio State Football (@OhioStateFB) November 4, 2024

Styles, who was previously named to the Butkus Award watch list this offseason, earns the honor in just his first year playing linebacker at Ohio State. After starting all of last year for the Buckeyes at safety, the Pickerington Central product has made a seamless transition closer to the line of scrimmage at Will linebacker, leading a stout scarlet and gray defense with 52 tackles (2 ½ for loss), along with one sack and a fumble recovery.

He has also seemed to turn it on during the back-half of the season. After totaling 30 tackles through his first five games (six per game) at his new position, the former safety has been more impactful with 22 stops in his last three contests (7.3 average), including nine each against Oregon and Penn State.

Styles, along with second-leading tackler and Mike linebacker Cody Simon, have helped set the tone in the middle for an Ohio State defense that ranks among the nation's best in nearly every defensive category entering Week 11 of the college football season, including second in total defense at 256.4 yards allowed per game, third in scoring defense (12.0 points allowed per game) and seventh in rushing defense (94.9 rushing yards per game).

Styles has the chance to become Ohio State's first winner of the Butkus Award — named after former two-time All-American and Pro Football Hall of Fame linebacker Dick Butkus — since his position coach

James Laurinaitis took home the honor his senior year in 2007. The only other Butkus Award winner in Ohio State history is Andy Katzenmoyer in 1997.

Last season, former Ohio State linebacker Tommy Eichenberg was named a semifinalist for the award but did not make the cut and lost out to winner N.C. State's Payton Wilson.

Styles will compete for the award alongside 14 other top defenders representing six conferences, including Alabama's Jihaad Campbell and Deontae Lawson, Clemson's Barrett Carter, Indiana's Aiden Fisher, Iowa's Jay Higgins and Texas' Anthony Hill Jr., among others.

Finalists for the Butkus Award will be named on Nov. 25 with a winner announced by Dec. 10.