

Ohio State Junior Sonny Styles Named Starting Will Linebacker For Season Opener Against Akron



Ohio State head coach Ryan Day announced Tuesday at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center that junior Sonny Styles will start at Will linebacker for the Buckeyes' season opener against Akron on Aug. 31.

Styles wins the job over fellow junior C.J. Hicks, and will now start alongside starting Mike linebacker and team captain/Block "O" recipient Cody Simon.

"Sonny will start at Will linebacker for us," Day said. "He's changed his body. And the reps he's gotten in the spring have really helped. He's communicated well with Cody."

Styles, a former five-star 2022 recruit out of Pickerington Central, earns the starting job for Week 1 in just his first full offseason at the position. He made the full-time transition from safety to linebacker this spring to make room for the transfer addition of former All-SEC Alabama safety Caleb Downs, and it has been a smooth one according to Day, Knowles and many of his other teammates.

"It's a change for Sonny because he's playing in the box from a low position, instead of dropping in," Knowles said this spring. "So things happen a lot faster. But he's reacted superbly. I mean, he's a guy who has football intelligence. He understands the scheme. Played a lot of positions. I think he's going to be great. Because one of the biggest parts of being a linebacker is you have to know all the pieces around you so you can play fast. And Sonny has shown a lot of that."

Styles will look to become a leader in the Buckeyes' vaunted defense after a strong sophomore season at safety, where he showed off his versatility with 53 tackles — a mark that ranked sixth on the team — along with 4.5 tackles for loss, two sacks, a pass breakup and one forced fumble.