

Ohio State's Defense Further Along Than Jim Knowles Expected



Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles knew that revamping the Buckeyes' defense would take a lot of work, and that it would be a work in progress as Ohio State prepares for the season-opener against Notre Dame on Sept. 3.

For as much optimism that Ohio State has shown about the defense over the past several weeks, even Knowles did not expect the Buckeyes' defense to move along as quickly as it has through the offseason and into fall camp.

"We are further than I thought we would be, absolutely," he said on Monday. "We have been able to create competitive situations against what arguably is the best offense and the best offensive coaches in the country. We have been able to be competitive.

"That's a big deal because you can only get better in practice, and that depends on who you're going against, what tempo, the situations, what's your attitude, and it has been competitive the whole time. Now we have to replicate that on the field, but you feel better about it because you've seen it in practice."

Knowles said back on Aug. 9 that Ohio State's defense had been 25 percent installed, and said that number would grow exponentially throughout fall camp. A man of his word, Knowles said Monday that the Buckeyes' defense is now up to 75 percent installed.

"I'm very comfortable with where we're at because we're going to have to pare it down, get specific to our opponent as we go," he said. "I think we've come a long way in terms of installation, and like I said in the spring and fall camp, further than expected. The players are very open to learning and they want to be great, so that part of it has been exciting. We've been able to get a lot in, but we're going to have to start to pare it back and get specific to our opponent."

While some might expect that number to be at 100 percent by the time Notre Dame strolls in Columbus, Knowles said that he never expected Ohio State's defense to be completely installed by the time the season begins or even into the season.

"I never expected to get to 100 (percent). We'll keep some things in reserve and pull them out as

needed as we go through the season, but I don't like to spring things on the players that are brand new as you're preparing for an opponent," he said. "My philosophy is get as much in as you can and then use that, have enough so you have answers."