

Sawyer Leaner, More Comfortable Entering Junior Campaign



Entering the program as Ohio State's highest-rated prospect for the class of 2021, defensive end Jack Sawyer has faced a litany of pressure and expectation in his first two seasons, with many expecting him to emerge as the next man up in a strong lineage of Buckeye pass rushers.

In his first two seasons, however, Sawyer has faced a consistent uphill climb. The Pickerington North product struggled to make an impact on a Kerry Combs-led defense in his first year in the Scarlet and Gray, recording just nine solo tackles and three sacks in 2021. Sawyer was then assigned to make a position change to the "Jack" linebacker in his sophomore season under first-year defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs, a sudden switch that failed to bring out his natural pass-rushing tendencies.

Now in his third year with the Buckeyes, Sawyer has returned to his natural position at defensive end, something that he thinks can bring out his best abilities.

"I feel very comfortable being back at defensive end," Sawyer said. I feel happy about it. When me and Coach (Jim) Knowles talked about it after the season, that's what I wanted to do, and that's what they thought I was best at too. So it was great, and it's been good being back at defensive end."

Sawyer, who is projected to start on Ohio State's front four this season alongside fellow end J.T. Tuimoloau and defensive tackles Michael Hall Jr. and Ty Hamilton, admitted that he has yet to play to his true potential at Ohio State. Sawyer believes that this will change, however, if he and his teammates commit to the daily grind of the regular season.

"I think a lot of us really had the career we thought we'd have in the first two seasons," Sawyer said. "It's hard to come in and on the defensive line and you know, put up those huge numbers. I don't think a lot of guys do that. So I just think, collectively, if we just put one foot in front of the other everyday and try to get better every single day, before we know it, during the season we'll look up and see all those numbers."

Sawyer has worked throughout the offseason to improve his physique and overall conditioning, claiming that he has lost six-to-seven percent of his body fat from last season. This has allowed the Buckeyes defensive end to play with a rekindled speed and ferocity during fall camp.

"I think this offseason, I wanted to trim up a little bit and lose some body fat, which I did," Sawyer said "So just getting in shape more, you know, getting my explosiveness back a little more and becoming a little more twitchy again. That was my main focus this offseason."

According to his teammate and fellow end Tuimoloau, Sawyer's new-look physique, along with the knowledge he gained from playing another position last season, can allow him to take another step towards his development.

"Him playing the Jack also helped him," Tuimoloau said. "He reads things a lot better. It just helped his mind. I know the jack is a difficult position, but he came by that same mindset, that hunger mindset and just kept going it going. It pushed all of us."

Tuimoloau said that playing alongside the now fully-comfortable and confident Sawyer at defensive end can pay dividends for both he and the rest of the front-four as they progress through the 2023 season — as they will use the energy and disruption he creates on the edge to wreak havoc on opposing quarterbacks.

"(I see) energy, Tuimoloau said. "I see him on that end, and we feed off one another," JT said. "When he's hyped, I'm hyped. And that's just how the whole defensive line works."