

Tyleik Williams And Ty Hamilton Unveil New “TNT” Nickname



Ohio State’s new defensive tackle duo has a brand new nickname. Ty Hamilton and Tyleik Williams shall be referred to as ‘TNT,’ according to Hamilton, who etched the nickname into stone on Wednesday.

“I like to call us TNT,” Hamilton said during a press conference on Wednesday. “We’re out there we call each other TNT, it’s like an explosion every time we’re on the field.”

On the one hand with names as close as Tyleik and Ty for two players both on the interior of the defensive line who both seem poised for very solid senior and fifth-year seasons respectively, the nickname practically wrote itself.

On the other hand, the duo haven’t played in a game together as starting defensive tackles and there already is a nickname in place. Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson subscribes to the latter rationale, going back to what the defensive line at Ohio State has gone by for much of his time in Columbus.

“I’m not sold on TNT yet,” Johnson said. “I like The Rushmen better.”

Williams, meanwhile, is a believer.

“I feel like we’re explosive. TNT is explosive and our names are like Ty and Ty so we just thought it was a good nickname,” Williams said. “We have a handshake that goes along with it, I think it’ll be cool throughout the season.”

Whether its The Rushmen, TNT or whatever nickname they’re known by, Williams and Hamilton hope they’re called the best defensive tackle duo in the country by year’s end.

“Just being the best defensive line we can be (are the expectations), we want to be No. 1,” Hamilton said. “That’s the spot we reach for every day. Like Coach (Johnson) says, we’re trying to reach the summit, climb that mountain and be at the top.”

Williams and Hamilton's success is something that is paramount to the level of play of the entire defense, according to Johnson.

"It makes us better," Johnson said. "If you can stop the run from the inside you've got a chance to be real special on defense. So those guys do a great job of their hats, their hands and their physicality at the line of scrimmage and that makes a difference. It makes our ends' jobs easier when you have the guys who can manage the middle."

Williams wasted no time in breaking out onto the scene as a true freshman, finishing with five sacks in 12 games. While he was maybe not as disruptive in his sophomore season as he was as a freshman, Williams still got recognition as an honorable mention on the All-Big Ten team. Then as a junior, Williams truly cemented himself as a cornerstone of the Ohio State defense. After a strong year in 2023, Williams was one of several defenders capable of going early in the NFL draft who decided to come back for their senior season instead.

"I mean (Hamilton and senior defensive ends Jack Sawyer and JT Tuimoloau) are my guys. I came in with them and I'm going to leave with them," Hamilton said. "I want to win something together with them. I'm glad we all made the decision to come back. I think it'll help this team greatly and help us greatly."

Hamilton split reps with former two-time All-Big Ten selection, Michael Hall Jr., in his third and fourth years. Hamilton did receive eight starts in 2023 and was a strong contributor on a top-five Ohio State defense with 38 total tackles, two sacks and 4½ tackles for loss. With Hall's departure to the NFL and Hamilton's improvements to his pass-rushing over the offseason, Hamilton has vaulted not just into a full-time starting role next to Williams but a leadership role as one of the veterans on the defense.

"A lot of the younger guys look up to the older guys," Williams said. "Just being able to share my experience, being able to teach younger guys and pass off wisdom that I have makes me a better player and helps me be a better leader."

For Williams and Hamilton, the TNT nickname isn't just a fun moniker for the duo but indicative of their style of play. Explosiveness may not be the first word that comes to mind for many football fans when they think of interior defensive linemen, but Williams and Hamilton hope that is the case for them.

"Around the world, defensive tackles are usually guys that just eat up space, but here we're playmakers," Williams said. "We're not just here to fit the gap, we're here to fit the gap and make the play."

Before the TNT nickname was even thought of, opposing teams knew of the Buckeyes' defensive line's disruptiveness, and for that reason rushing the passer is as much an exercise in patience and discipline as anything else, according to Williams.

"We definitely want to be more disruptive and get more sacks but if anyone is going against Ohio State they get the ball out fast," Williams said. "They're not going to let us rush them because they know what is going to happen. Teams are smart. They know not to hold the ball, quick screens, and quick passes, but if they hold the ball it'll be a completely different story."

"(Going up against quick passing offenses) is frustrating, but it is what it is," Williams said. "We cut out half their gameplan by just being an explosive defensive line."

Ohio State will not play every game against Akron, Western Michigan and Marshall — games in which they are at least a five-touchdown favorite — and some teams will try to take chances down the field. When that opportunity arises Williams and Hamilton should have the chance to bring their TNT nickname and the handshake that comes with it to fruition.