

Tyleik Williams Has Dropped 40 Pounds, Feels Much Quicker



Ohio State defensive tackle Tyleik Williams has hopes of becoming an integral part of the team's defensive line in 2022. He's not a former five-star recruit like fellow sophomores Jack Sawyer and J.T. Tuimoloau, but Williams shone in moments a season ago, racking up four sacks in two games against Akron and Tulsa early in the season.

He finished the year with five sacks, second on the team to Haskell Garrett. Even more, Williams produced that statistic with only 114 pass rushes according to Pro Football Focus. PFF credited him with 21 pressures on those snaps.

Still, he struggled to see the field much in his first season in Columbus, which left many Ohio State fans confused. Williams offered a blunt reason for his lack of playing time after the team's spring practice on March 24.

"I was fat," Williams said.

Williams didn't play his senior year of high school after the coronavirus pandemic caused Virginia to cancel its football season. In that time of inactivity, Williams admits he let himself go physically. When the 6-3 Williams enrolled at Ohio State as a four-star prospect ranked 166th nationally by 247Sports, he weighed 360 pounds.

"I was supposed to be around 320, but COVID got the best of me," he said. "It was rough. I was always last in the drills."

Williams went on a nutrition plan that helped him lose over 40 pounds since the start of last season. Not only does he look thinner, Williams also saw benefits to his speed and quickness from the lost weight. Recently, Ohio State timed Williams' 10-yard dash at 1.62 seconds.

"You always saw his athleticism, like tremendously athletic, one of the better athletes we have on our team," said Ohio State coach Ryan Day. "From zero to 10 yards, he has one of our better times, and we have some really good athletes."

Williams believes he can keep that athleticism this season. He acknowledged how hard it was to lose the weight, but he's pleased with the transformation to become leaner. Day said he's been impressed with the changes, too.

"His body's very different," Day said. "He can go for an extended period of time. He flashed again (March 24) at practice."

Still, Ohio State likely won't need to use Williams for more than 60 snaps per game, so his conditioning isn't as significant a factor as it could be at other positions. Defensive line coach Larry Johnson rotates linemen at defensive tackle, including Jerron Cage, Mike Hall, Ty Hamilton, Jaden McKenzie and Taron Vincent.

Even with such depth at the position, Williams sees himself as a frontrunner to play starting-level snaps next season.

"I was always quick," he said. "But now I think I'm starting to actually see my true potential. Last year, I was actually huge, so I couldn't show what I really could do. Now I'm at that (proper) weight."

Ohio State's defensive line wasn't as dominant as it expected to be in 2021. With new defensive coordinator Jim Knowles now in control of the scheme and most of its weapons returning, the Buckeyes believe it'll live up to its promise this season.

Williams is one of the weapons who can make that happen.

"I believe in myself, and we all believe in each other," Williams said.