

Zach Harrison Comments On Move To Interior Defensive Line



Although he has spent much of his career playing on the edge of the defensive line, fourth-year defensive end Zach Harrison showcased his versatility during Ohio State's 49-10 win over Rutgers.

The Lewis Center, Ohio, native played a hand in a pair of Buckeye takeaways, but he didn't operate from his natural position on the end of the line — but rather from a down-stance in the three-tech. Harrison emphasized that he's enjoyed his time inside and that he's willing to bump into the interior whenever needed.

"I told (defensive line coach Larry Johnson) that I like it and if he wants to put me in there, I have no problem rushing from a three-tech," Harrison said. "I'm working on it a little bit at practice, doing some one-on-ones at three-tech."

Harrison noted that his length and athleticism give him a new-found advantage when playing out of the three-tech, which he may not have had while rushing from the end. His utilization of that length aided the Buckeyes in both of his forced takeaways.

With the Scarlet Knights at midfield late in the first quarter, Rutgers quarterback Evan Simon tried to evade Ohio State's pass rush and as he stepped up he was met by Harrison — who had initially lined up in a three-tech. From there, Harrison wrapped up Simon while jarring the ball loose which opened up the opportunity for defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr. to recover it.

During the third quarter, Harrison — who started the play lined up over the center — stunted to take on the guard one-on-one, driving him back and forcing Simon into a hurried throw. Harrison then lifted his arm to bat the pass into the air, allowing linebacker Steele Chambers to make the easy interception.

After the game, Harrison noted that playing against centers and guards differed from his typical assignment against tackles.

“It’s just different. One thing, there’s not a lot of space, which definitely is sometimes hard for me. I’m a longer guy, I got long arms and a lot of the inside guys don’t have that length. I feel like I can use that and use my quickness and speed to get around those guys,” Harrison said. “You can tell it’s a little different to rush against. Normally, they block guys who are 300-something pounds with a little shorter build. I feel like I got an advantage on the inside, rushing against guards and centers.”

His move to the interior is felt by his fellow defensive linemen. Second-year defensive end Jack Sawyer — who also mans the team’s ‘Jack’ position — said that Harrison lining up inside gives the Buckeyes a unique threat up front.

“His speed and his length, guards aren’t used to seeing guys that big and that fast,” Sawyer said. “I think it’s a mismatch 90 percent of the time.”