

Maryland Welcomes Ohio State Transfer Keandre Jones With Open Arms



Keandre Jones left Ohio State to return home to Maryland following his junior season in Columbus.

The former Buckeye linebacker entered the transfer portal and decided to play for Mike Locksley and the Terrapins, to whom he had originally committed in 2016.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin asked Locksley at Big Ten Media Days about the addition of Jones and Maryland's head coach expressed his pleasure in bringing in the former four-star talent.

"Obviously I had a very personal strong relationship with Keandre. He had committed to Maryland when I was there back in '15 along with Dwayne Haskins. And when I left to go to Alabama, I know they decided to go elsewhere.

"But what Keandre brings to the table for us is just having been a part of a winning program, I like to say success leaves clues, and Keandre has been able to bring some of those clues with him. And how he teaches our players as an older player that has had great success at a high level like I've had as a coach, the behaviors and habits that you need to create to get to where you can be successful as a program.

"And I really like the work ethic that he brought to the table. He kept his mouth shut and he's really earned the respect of our team with his leadership based on how he works and the behaviors and habits that he has."

The hard-working habits Locksley spoke of did not take long to rub off on Jones' new teammates in College Park, Maryland. Senior safety/linebacker Antoine Brooks Jr. shared similar enthusiasm as Locksley regarding the addition of Jones to the Terrapin defense.

"Shoot, he brings a lot to the program," Brooks Jr. told BSB of Jones. "He's a good outside linebacker, shoot, he could be a good D-end if he wanted to. Keandre — he brings a lot to the table.

"Keandre is what a veteran is. He's always working out. He asks me if I want to work out extra, even when I'm dog tired. I'm actually excited. I can't wait to play with him."

Coming out of Olney (Md.) Good Counsel, Jones was the nation's No. 98 overall recruit and No. 9

outside linebacker. Despite having been so highly touted out of high school, Jones did not crack the starting linebacker rotation in his three years at Ohio State.

A key contributor on special teams during his Buckeye tenure, Jones tallied 29 tackles (19 solo), 1.5 tackles for loss, one sack, one pass break up and one blocked punt, which resulted in a pivotal safety in a 36-31 victory against Nebraska on Nov. 3.

Although Jones did not see the field much for the Scarlet and Gray, his new teammate, redshirt sophomore running back Anthony McFarland Jr. — who rushed for 298 yards and two touchdowns against Ohio State on Nov. 17 — said he was well aware of Jones' ability to perform at a high level.

"He's been doing good since day one," McFarland Jr. said of Jones' integration into the program. "He's a home kid, too, he's from Maryland, so he came right in and we welcomed him with open arms. He came in and worked — he's still working hard. And we're looking for him to be a big-time player for us this year — big-time player."

While Brooks Jr. and McFarland Jr. continue to become more accustomed to Jones as a teammate, Locksley's long-time relationship with Jones begins a new chapter.

Locksley said an update on Jones' eligibility status had not yet been given. From the way he spoke about Jones, it was evident he wants to see the Olney, Md., native on the field sooner than later.

BSB asked Locksley what was different about Jones as a high-school recruit to a college transfer, and the coach reflected on how much Jones has grown both on and off the field.

"I think the big thing is just seeing his maturity," Locksley said of Jones. "I've always been a big fan of Keandre. If you know his background and his family situation and how he grew up, he's a kid that the community helped raise. And he had high school coaches and youth coaches and his mom all work together to get him to where he was able to earn a scholarship to Ohio State.

"To me, just seeing his maturity level and how he approaches things. I always talk about these behaviors — kid's got it, man. He understands the behaviors and habits you need to have to be successful, not even just football, but in life. And it's so rewarding for me as a coach when I see a kid like Keandre who I've known since he was in seventh, eighth grade, show up after not seeing him in quite a long time — three, four years — and just how much he's matured as a person.

"As a player, this guy brings a tenacious work ethic, keeps his mouth shut, does everything you ask of him with the right intentions and efforts and discipline. He is just a luxury to have in our locker room because of being around winning, which he did at Ohio State. But also being able to be a voice of leadership, because for me, leadership is your ability to have a positive impact on others. And he's already started to do that for us at Maryland."

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