

Dawand Jones Making Push For Starting Tackle Position



Ohio State offensive lineman Dawand Jones has emerged in the first week of fall camp, and head coach Ryan Day and offensive line coach Greg Studrawa noticed.

In fact, Jones may have earned a starting spot at right tackle.

In Tuesday morning's practice, the first offensive line unit looks a little different than anticipated. It included Nicholas Petit-Frere at left tackle, Paris Johnson Jr. at left guard, Harry Miller at center, Munford at right guard and Jones at right tackle.

The five linemen could be the starters for Ohio State's first game against Minnesota; however, Day said he is still putting together the pieces.

"We're moving those guys around right now trying to figure that part of it out," Day said. "It's tricky. I wish I could give you an answer. Maybe by the end of the week to next week, we'll know, but they'll all kind of played guard, they've played some tackle, we've moved right to left, left to right, all the above right now."

Jones is making progress and has impressed coaches with his growth over the past three seasons. Progress hasn't always been easy for Jones, though. As a freshman, he lacked a passion for playing football and a desire to become a better player.

"I was lazy," Jones said. "I didn't move well, I didn't listen, and I didn't show up on time. Just the basic stuff."

The 6-8, 356-pound Jones towers above his teammates, including his fellow offensive lineman, and he had always relied on physical ability to get by. Jones said his laziness continued into his sophomore season. Then, sometime after his second year ended, he fell in love with football, and he decided to dedicate time to working on his craft in the offseason.

"The game grew on me, and it's become my life now," Jones said. "In the spring and summer, I was like, 'I gotta turn it on.' These guys believe in me, and I know I can do it. I have to go out there and keep doing it."

Jones said he spent extensive time with performance director Mickey Marotti this summer to lose weight and put on muscle. He also runs on the treadmill after practice to work on his endurance. Jones said he'd lost 15 pounds since the beginning of last summer and 28 pounds since his freshman season.

Studrawa acknowledged Jones' hard work thus far and said he's been a "dominant" pass blocker through the first six practices of fall camp.

"When he sets in pass pro, believe me, nobody is going around him, and they're not going through him," Studrawa said.

Day agreed, claiming that Jones' size provides a significant advantage over opposing defenders. Still, Day is looking for him to become more dependable with each rep.

"He has the ability to dominate because of his size, strength and athleticism," Day said. "But again, it's about consistency and being able to do it for four quarters. He's further along than he's been, so he's just got to keep growing and pounding away."

Both Day and Studrawa reiterated that they are looking for the best five players to start on the offensive line. The coaches will utilize the group's versatility to assemble an offensive line with superior physical and mental ability.

While no final decisions have been made on who will start on the offensive line, Studrawa said it would be hard to keep Jones off the field. Jones has always had the talent and the love for competition, but he needed to focus on the little things.

Day said he has seen "flashes" from Jones in the first five fall camp practices but is still making up his mind about him and his place in the starting lineup.

"If he can just keep putting one day in front of the other, these next two weeks will be really important for him — because he has the ability, and he's flashed at times," Day said. "He can do it. Now, can he consistently do it over time? Which is the key to an offensive lineman because it's a grind being an offensive lineman.

"You have to be tough. You don't get a ball, especially for someone who played a lot of basketball like Dawand. You don't get to touch the ball. You have to continually embrace what it means to be an offensive lineman. That's a lot of walkthroughs. That's a lot of meeting time. That's a lot of drill work. It's a grind, and you have to embrace that. Once he embraces that, the sky is the limit for him."