

Jack Sawyer To Remain At Defensive End Throughout Spring Practice



Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said Tuesday that defensive lineman Jack Sawyer will line up at defensive end this spring after playing at the Jack last season.

"Jack will be a (defensive) end with J.T. (Tuimoloau)," Knowles said following Ohio State's first spring practice. "He'll work on all those fundamentals of being an end. I think that's important for Jack.

"I feel like he didn't have the improvement or big jump he could have last year because he got involved in the Jack stuff and maybe he wasn't as focused as he could have been to make those improvements at (defensive) end," Knowles continued. "I want to make sure I keep him at (defensive) end opposite J.T."

Sawyer had an up-and-down season filling in at the hybrid defensive end/linebacker role last season, finishing tied for the team-high with 4.5 sacks while experiencing several quiet outings at the position. Ohio State also saw some brief contributions at the Jack from defensive linemen Javontae Jean-Baptiste and Caden Curry, but Sawyer filled the majority of snaps.

With Sawyer moving away from the Jack and defensive end Mitchell Melton recovering from an injury this spring, Knowles said the Jack will not be a significant focus over the new few weeks.

"We did not quite use the position as much as I had hoped last year," Knowles said. "It just didn't seem to develop with our personnel, so this spring I just want to focus on the fundamentals of our four-down and getting better at the fundamentals."

Once he does return focus to the Jack, though, Knowles has several options in mind. One is Melton, who seemed prime to compete for the job last season before suffering a torn ACL. Another is sophomore linebacker C.J. Hicks, who seems set for a significant role on Ohio State's defense this season but has a logjam at his position, with linebackers Tommy Eichenberg and Steele Chambers both returning.

“I’ve thought about (the Jack) for C.J., because when directed, he’s skilled,” Knowles said. “He can get from Point A to Point B quickly. I don’t know how much we’ll be delving into the Jack this spring, but I think it is something to look at (for) C.J. for the fall.”