

Jim Knowles Says Defense Is “100 Percent Ready” For Notre Dame



Entering his first season as Ohio State's defensive coordinator, Jim Knowles was tasked with overhauling the Buckeyes' scheme while instilling his own values within the minds of his players.

With Ohio State's season-opener against Notre Dame less than a week away, Knowles said his defense is 100 percent ready to take on the Fighting Irish.

"We've put them through the crucible. We go against the nation's best offense everyday," Knowles said on Tuesday. "We've pushed, prodded and poked and tried to stretch them as far as they can go. So wherever they're at right now, it's 100 percent, and that's what I dial the game plan into. I'm confident."

While overhauling the Buckeyes' defense scheme was at the center of Knowles' first offseason in Columbus, he also placed significant attention to building a new attitude within the defense as a whole.

"It's all one thing. You're installing your scheme, but the whole time you're building a mindset," Knowles said. "You're building a mindset of excellence, and this is how we do it. This is how we're going to do it everyday. We're going to do it on the grass in practice and that's how the game is going to go. It really is about expectations. Once the players know that you care, they'll go through the wall for you. I believe we're at that point."

Knowles is tasked with turning around an Ohio State defense that allowed 22.8 points and 372.6 yards per game last season. While the spotlight may be shining on him, Knowles is not feeling it.

With 35 years of coaching experience to lean on, Knowles said that his coaching philosophy is unchanged despite being in a high-level role at a perennial powerhouse like Ohio State.

"It's the same process, the expectations are different," Knowles said. "That hasn't changed what I do or

how I do it, but you know the expectations are there. I stay locked in, maybe even more than I have in the past.”

Knowles and the Buckeyes get the privilege of opening the season in front of their home crowd against a first-time starting quarterback in Notre Dame’s Tyler Buchner.

Despite having the opportunity to fluster an inexperienced quarterback, Knowles said there is no added benefit to coaching against a first-time starter.

“I think that it’s kind of a wild card, you don’t know what to expect that much,” Knowles said. “You really have to be ready for anything.

“You fall back more onto your system because you really don’t know what to expect,” he continued.

While the Buckeyes’ attention has fully shifted toward Notre Dame, Knowles said his defense can draw comfort from its understanding of his scheme against the Fighting Irish.

“Motivation comes from teaching and re-teaching, and gaining the respect of know what you’re talking about,” Knowles said. “You give them a reason to do it and you kind of show them how it works. That’s motivation because you’re teaching them and then you’re showing them the reasoning, such as ‘this is why we do it.’ This is the why. Usually that’s enough.”