

Jim Knowles Wants Caden Curry To Get More Playing Time, Sees Great Potential In Kenyatta Jackson



Last week, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day and defensive coordinator Jim Knowles both lauded the play and stamina of junior linebackers Jack Sawyer and J.T. Tuimoloau, saying they have earned the staff's trust to play nearly every snap in every game.

The Buckeyes would slightly change their tune in the team's 37-17 victory over Maryland, however, when Knowles and defensive line coach Larry Johnson seemingly instituted a revolving door at the defensive end position on Saturday, with younger sophomores Caden Curry and Kenyatta Jackson each seeing much more playing time.

When asked about the usage of the two emerging defenders, who mostly replaced Sawyer and generated some pressure off the edge, Knowles said he thinks both guys are ready and able to produce when their number is called, with Curry especially deserving more time in the starting lineup as the season progresses.

"(We want to play Curry) for as many reps as we can," Knowles said Tuesday at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. "There's a rotation up front that Coach Johnson works on, and you really have to go with the flow of the game and how it's going and what we're seeing. So there's no exact number, but you really have to go with what's happening in the game."

"Kenyatta is ready to go," Knowles added. "He can play as much as we need him."

When asked about Curry — who generated some pressure off the edge and recorded a quarterback hurry and pass breakup against the Terrapins — Knowles said that he has seen the second-year player compete with a relentless intensity and drive so far this season, making him a key component of a mostly ineffective Buckeyes' pass rush.

"He's a guy who plays with his hair on fire," Knowles said. He plays above his measurables when you look at him for being a guy who maybe doesn't have all the height or weight. He's just one of those guys that will fly around. And that makes a difference. I think it's a great change of pace to throw at an

offense.”

Knowles indicated that he likes what he is seeing from both Jackson and Curry, who have combined for six tackles, a quarterback hurry and the previously mentioned pass deflection through the first five games, but he still maintained full belief in the abilities of both Sawyer and Tuimoloau. While Tuimoloau had a strong showing against the Terrapins, recording four tackles and 1.5 sacks, the tandem has underperformed thus far in 2023, combining for 31 tackles and 3.5 tackles for loss.

“I think Jack is doing everything we asked him to do,” Knowles said. “He’s strong at the point of attack. He understands his role in the defense. And he’s one of the 11 we can count on.”

(Tuimoloau) is excelling at his position,” Knowles said. “He understands the position. He has great football intelligence. So he’s a weapon. We certainly can do other things with him, but he’s performing well at what he’s doing.”