

Ohio State Defensive End Jack Sawyer Looking To Replicate Success From End Of Junior Season In 2024



Ohio State senior defensive end Jack Sawyer experienced a topsy-turvy start to his Buckeyes career, with his first two-and-a-half seasons defined by a lack of production and a position change in 2022 that may have stunted his growth off the edge.

With many of the Buckeye faithful wondering when — or if — the former five-star defensive end out of Pickerington North would break out and show his full potential in the Scarlet and Gray, Sawyer silenced those doubts in the back half of his junior season with a breakout performance. Fully submerged at his natural defensive end position, Sawyer wreaked havoc on opposing defenses in the final six games of the 2023 season, racking up 28 tackles (eight for loss), and 5.5 of his 6.5 total sacks.

Speaking with the media for the first time since announcing his return to Ohio State on March 7, Sawyer said these end-of-the-year successes — which was capped by an impressive three-sack performance against Missouri in the Cotton Bowl — stemmed from a renewed sense confidence and comfortability he gained while playing at his natural position, which forced him to rely more on his instincts rather than thinking.

“I felt like I was in a groove, probably the whole second half of the season,” Sawyer said. “I felt like myself again. I was just out there playing, having fun with my teammates. When you come here and you expect to hit the field, and to be a certain way, it’s hard to get over that for a little bit.”

Sawyer’s change in mentality was infectious for the entire defensive line at the end of the 2023 season. Senior defensive tackle Ty Hamilton said that the unit felt they had an obligation to increase their activity and production towards the end of the year to do their part in the defense, an effort that he thought the then-junior Sawyer led with his dominance off the edge.

“As a unit together, we just wanted to do better, we wanted to be better every single game, and I feel like he just understood that,” Hamilton said. “Every time he went in, he just knew that we were playing for each other. So he went out there, he stopped thinking and just played. And the play showed out for him.”

Sawyer, who announced he is returning to Ohio State for his senior season in January, said he is hoping to channel that end-of-season production and activity on the line into his final season at Ohio State, where he will look to continue playing with a free and instinctive mind off the edge, while also continuing to improve upon his game by working on his hand and hip placement.

“I’ve known all along what I was capable of,” Sawyer said. “It was frustrating the first few years, not playing up to — for whatever reason — what I was capable of on the field. But once you just put that stuff to the side, go out there and play ball like you know how, it’s just going to take care of itself.”