

# OSU O-Line Excited For Challenge Of Georgia Front



Paris Johnson has gotten first-round NFL draft hype throughout this year, but none of it has gone to his head.

"I try not to think about the next level, because I've seen a lot of players think about it while they're in college and they're not living in the moment," the third-year offensive tackle said. "It starts to affect their play. It starts to affect their mindset, their mentality."

What's in front of him and the Ohio State offensive line as a whole Saturday could be their toughest challenge yet. Georgia's defensive line has been the catalyst for a defense ranked No. 2 nationally in scoring and No. 1 in rushing yards allowed per game, led by a virtual first-round lock in defensive tackle Jalen Carter.

"(Our offensive linemen are) hungry," offensive line coach Justin Frye said. "Getting an opportunity to play again is huge. They've responded well, they're competitive guys, they're prideful guys. So they didn't walk away with their tail between their legs (after the Michigan game), you don't have to challenge them to step back up."

There's a tradition of fantastic defensive linemen that has propelled Georgia to much of its recent success.

Three first-round defensive linemen — tackles Jordan Davis and Devonte Wyatt and end Travon Walker — guided the team to its first national championship in 40 years in 2021, with Walker being the first overall selection in the 2022 Draft.

Carter might only have three sacks in the 10 games he's played this season, but he's racked up 25 total quarterback pressures per Pro Football Focus and seven tackles for loss.

"He's a very skilled player, a very high-level player that's going to be playing on Sundays," Frye said. "Whether it be the SEC or the ACC, the benefit even that we have here is that we're practicing against really good D-linemen too."

While Carter collapses the pocket from the interior, defensive end Mykel Williams provides the majority of calamity from the edge, with 28 total pressures on the year including 2½ sacks. A bevy of blitz-capable linebackers aide in the efforts as well, with Jamon Dumas-Johnson and Nolan Smith picking up an even three sacks apiece.

"They're a talented bunch," Frye said. "They know their scheme well, you can tell they play hard and fast and physical because they're in the right positions, the right calls, the right spots and they just play hard."

None of that will change Ohio State's approach in pass protection, however, pre Frye. Specific calls and adjustments might be made, but nothing fundamental needs to change about the way the front five protects third-year quarterback C.J. Stroud.

"Schematically, there's enough things (installed) where you've just got to make sure you're in the right call to help with that," Frye said. "But to say that there's an individual game plan or a changing of what you do? No. We're not going to do that."

How the Buckeyes generate pockets for Stroud and open up some space for the ground game will be one of the most critical factors to what would be an upset victory Saturday, per its leading man.

"You have to be able to win the line of scrimmage," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said. "The team that wins the line of scrimmage typically wins the game. That goes back a long time. So we have to do that again in this game."