

Proctor Seeks Return To Starting Safety Spot In Fifth Season With Ohio State



In each of the last three seasons, Josh Proctor has begun the campaign as one of Ohio State's starting safeties. But, several factors have limited his ability to remain on the field in a starting capacity in each of the last two seasons.

Proctor enjoyed a prosperous 2020 campaign, in which he saw his snaps increase on a game-to-game basis and he elevated into a starting-caliber player. Everything looked up for Proctor heading into 2021, as he claimed the starting free safety spot, but a gruesome leg injury in Ohio State's Week 2 loss to Oregon cut his season well short.

He reclaimed a starting spot the following season, slotting in as the boundary safety — otherwise known as the bandit — in Jim Knowles' defense, but was quickly pushed into a reserve role with the emergence of Lathan Ransom. Although the transfer portal or NFL Draft were potential options for Proctor this offseason, the safety decided to remain at Ohio State and compete for another opportunity to start for the scarlet and gray.

"I just felt like it was the best fit for me and nobody can stop me if I get out of my own way," Proctor said. "I just decided to stay here, buckle down and handle my business."

For Proctor, the key to staying on the field lies in consistency, whether that's within the game of football or life in general. The Owasso, Okla., native described a need to continue to push himself to be the most consistent version of himself during the offseason and into the fall.

"That's what I'm working toward," Proctor said. "I'm working toward being consistent in everything I do day in and day out, whether that's football, the classroom, being a better person, anything."

That consistency may come easier to Proctor this season, as following the one-year stint at the bandit, Proctor has lined up at the adjuster — also known as the free safety — in spring camp, his natural

position. Not only will he return to his natural spot in the defense, but he'll also benefit from the consistency of playing within Knowles' defense for the second straight year — a first for Proctor in his time with the Buckeyes.

With several factors aiding Proctor in his quest for consistency, he noted that he's excited to operate within the same system for the second-straight year.

"I've had a new coach or system every year since I've been here," Proctor said. "That's probably been the biggest challenge.

"It feels good," he continued. "I'm learning a new spot and as far as that goes, not really much has changed. It's definitely easier to pick up on things and remember things from last year that I probably didn't notice."

While Proctor's placed specific attention to his consistency this season, Knowles added that he's liked the approach Proctor has brought to spring camp.

"I'm seeing a focus, a determination, Josh is a really great kid to be around," Knowles said. "He's become extremely serious this spring. He knows it's his chance, he's running out of time, we can point out things that have happened to him in the past and we can teach from it. He's got to do it in practice, that's the only time he can do it, and he is.

"I'm seeing some good things from him."

Although Proctor faced his share of adversity during his time as a Buckeye, and admitted that his eye did wander to places beyond the Woody Hayes Athletic Center at times, he emphasized that he's excited to be back in Columbus for one final run.

"This is always the place that I wanted to be, that's why I signed that letter of intent to come here," Proctor said. "I love to compete, I love this atmosphere and I love Ohio State. So I just felt like this was the best decision for me to help me grow in a lot of different ways."