

# Simon Growing Confidence In Self, Position Room



Cody Simon is an elder statesman in the Ohio State's linebacker room now.

The senior has embraced more of a leadership role entering the 2023 campaign, and alongside it has seen his confidence grow. After playing spot duty and being the team's third linebacker in designated subpackages a season ago, Simon is looking for his role to expand this upcoming year.

"I definitely feel like I developed as a leader throughout the winter and the spring," Simon said. "Just being able to teach young guys and giving them my experience, then also having Coach (James) Laurinaitas in the room. There's so much knowledge around the game, around playing linebacker. It's like 10 fold, how much it helps. We're so thankful to have coach in there and all the young guys together."

An uptick in playing time is what the Ohio State coaching staff could be looking for from Simon too.

"I definitely want to rotate them more. I think Cody Simon, with Tommy (Eichenberg) out this spring, Cody's gonna have a big spring," Ohio State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said after Ohio State's first spring practice March 7. "And he's gonna put himself in a position to play regularly. That's my vision so that we can have a really nice rotation there. Which, when you're playing 14, 15 games, is gonna help us at the end of the year."

Eichenberg's absence as one of the team's returning starters and that of senior linebacker Steele Chambers in the back half of spring practice allowed Simon to eat up all the first-team reps his heart desired. And as Knowles indicated earlier, it could play to his benefit.

Of course, Simon's focus stayed on the game of younger players like sophomores C.J. Hicks and Gabe Powers in addition to his own.

"A big part of our team for me, and Ohio State in general, is next man up mentality," Simon said. "We

knew we were going to have Tommy down, and Steele went out. The most important is getting the young guys to be ready and I think we did a great job.”

His expectations for not just himself and the defense, but the linebacker room as a whole, remain high for this year. With a year in Knowles’ system and the addition of Laurinaitis, Simon feels as though the unit should be among the nation’s best.

“I don’t even know what the limit is,” Simon said. “If we do what we do, we lead the defense, we could be top in the country no matter what. That’s our goal, it’s always our goal to be the best. I couldn’t even give you a visualization, just that our goal is to be the best in the country.”