

Eight In The Boxen

by Captain Kangaroo August 22, 2017

For most defensive tackles, “eight in the box” signals a formation where extra run support typically comes from the strong safety. “Eight in the Boxen”? For The University of Akron lineman Brock Boxen, it references the support provided by eight stainless steel screws embedded in his left fibula.

Those screws, plus a 10 inch metal plate, were necessary to stabilize the bone after the force of a falling player shattered it in Game #7 of the Zips’ 2016 season. Boxen matter-of-factly recalls the event - *“The play before I’d just got a nice sack. The next play a guy falls on me...I reached down...felt something wrong with my leg, and it was broken.”*

Despite the injury’s severity, Boxen was a full contact participant in the subsequent 2017 spring practices. Says Boxen of his rehab - *“I was ahead of schedule. Around Christmas time I went back home and did my own therapy. They got me doing a little more stuff than I was supposed to, and it felt good. That allowed me to start working hard again, and getting better. I gained about 10 pounds in the offseason. My speed isn’t where I want, but I’m climbing back to where I want to be. I probably run a 4.9 right now.”*

As far as strength is concerned, Boxen feels he’s better than ever. *“Nothing dropped off. I got a little bit stronger on my bench. My squat is better...power clean got better...so I’m doing good.”*

As expected with such a traumatic injury, there are residual aches and pains. *“It kind of depends on the day whether it bothers me or not. If something happens to it in the previous practice, it might be a little sore (for the next one), but one I start getting going, I’m fine.”*

Moving on from the injury and looking forward to the upcoming 2017 season, the six foot two, 290 lb junior lineman is bullish on the Zips defense. *“We now have depth - that’s what we lacked last year. Once people started getting hurt we pulled up freshman who’d never played, and they didn’t have the experience. Today, everyone’s on the same page. Everyone’s going out trying to be great every day. Everyone’s working hard and no one’s mad*



about competition or losing a spot...we’re all working hard. I like that.”

As the focus turns towards the Zips upcoming game against the nationally ranked Penn State, the straight-talking Pennsylvania native treats it as just another game. *“Growing up, we were Pittsburgh fans, so we hated Penn State.”* He then added; *“But it’ll be exciting. That’s what we all look forward to every year is game #1, playing in front of that many people.”*

Are there any extra jitters when playing in front of a crowd that may very well exceed a November weeknight InfoCision crowd by 100,000? *“I don’t think it affects us as much as people think it does. We just go out there and we play ball.”*

With so much time between the end of the 2016 season and the September 2nd game at Beaver Stadium, the Zips have had ample time study-up on their opponent. *“We really started looking at them at the beginning of summer... watching the USC game...watching what kind of schemes they run. We know who’s returning. They lost a tackle and they lost both their guards. They moved a guard out to tackle. We have a good feeling what they can do, and what they can’t do, and we’re going to take advantage of their weaknesses.”*

When asked if there’s extra motivation when the Zips match up against nationally hyped All Americans, the response was short; *“Yeah, you wanna go more. It makes you wanna take ‘em down a few times.*

From what I’ve seen, I know we have the talent that can match up against them. We have low pads, we’re doing everything right. We’re working as a unit with good communication. I think our chances (of pulling off the upset) are pretty good.”

As we concluded our interview, I asked the former 3-star Rivals recruit and UConn target if he was enjoying his time at Akron. *“I’m having fun. I made my college decision on what I felt was the best fit for me, and Akron was it. It doesn’t matter where you’re playing, you’re playing football. I love my teammates, love the coaches. That’s why I’m here.”*

