

https://www.bgdailynews.com/sports/wku/wku-s-malone-stands-apart-as-one-of-nation-s/article_eb0e91d2-2141-5594-b79b-2c5d85d70160.html

WKU FOOTBALL

WKU's Malone stands apart as one of nation's top defensive linemen

Defensive end averaging nation-best 9.3 tackles per game among d-linemen

ELLIOTT PRATT epratt@bgdailynews.com 11 hrs ago



Western Kentucky's defense is relishing the spotlight as the team's strength and not putting too much on one player's consistency against the overall body of work.

"One man shines, we all shine," WKU defensive coordinator Clayton White said. "That's how we're living right now."

And that's certainly reflective of the attitude from one of college football's best defensive linemen by statistical measure. Hilltoppers defensive end DeAngelo Malone has become a force for opposing offenses and nothing seems to be slowing him down. Five weeks into the season, Malone's 9.3 tackles per game ranks higher than any other defensive lineman at the Football Bowl Subdivision level. That mark is good for 31st overall nationally and the next best defensive lineman by that measure is Kenny Willekes of Michigan State at 6.8 tackles per game.

Malone spoke of a higher motor he's playing with this season but credited the other 10 players for helping make that national ranking happen. Malone had no idea his successes were the best of any defensive lineman currently.

He spouted a "for real?" in the middle of being asked about the accomplishment.

"You always dream about doing things like that, so it's just a blessing," Malone said. "It feels good. They depend on me to do my job and I can't let them down."

The 6-foot-4, 230-pound defensive end is the compliment WKU's defense needs to the much bigger Juwuan Jones on the other side of the line. Malone and Jones both lead the team with four and 3.5 tackles for loss, respectively, as WKU's defense ranks 35th nationally with 31 tackles for loss and 46th in the country in sacks, averaging 2.5 per game.

Malone and safety Devon Key each lead the defense with 37 tackles through four games. Malone's numbers are the highest of any defensive lineman in the country and his nine tackles for loss rank third in the FBS and first in Conference USA.

He's already over halfway to his 60 total tackles as a junior.

"I feel good about it, but I'm not doing it for me," Malone said. "I'm doing it for the team. Whatever they need, it's for the team. I'm just getting to the ball. I feel like this year I'm finishing more and the whole defense is finishing and tackling well, pursuing the ball well."

Malone had 10 total tackles, two sacks and three tackles for loss in last Saturday's win over UAB. He also had the sack on Blazers quarterback Tyler Johnston III that sealed WKU's win.

White said watching Malone play Saturdays is the "final piece to the puzzle" for everything the defensive end has done throughout the week.

"It really starts with how he comes to meetings and practice and how it prepares him," White said. "To me, that's the best part of any player being successful. When you watch any player do that work before Saturday and it comes out on Saturday as production, then that's when it's really fun."

Malone's wreaking havoc has caused some opposing offenses to start doubling, even triple teaming, his pursuits. But that only opens up space somewhere else for another defender to make a play.

"Definitely some smart coaches out there who understand how to slow down a defensive end and it's our job to combat all that stuff to make sure he's in a good opportunity to make plays and by him making plays, it's also freeing up other guys.

"Sometimes his effort really outmatches the scheme or plan and it really comes down to your effort as a defensive player and your motor and that's how a lot of his tackles have been made, running things down and chasing things down. You can't scheme from that stuff."

— Follow WKU athletics beat writer Elliott Pratt on Twitter @EPrattBGDN or visit bgdailynews.com.



VIDEO: WKU defensive end DeAngelo Malone
ELLIOTT PRATT epratt@bgdailynews.com 12 hrs ago



VIDEO: WKU defensive coordinator Clayton White

ELLIOTT PRATT epratt@bgdailynews.com 12 hrs ago

MORE INFORMATION



Sliding after runs are crucial for preserving QB Storey

Penalties hurting Hilltoppers in 'situational football'

Helton: WKU's offense 'riding the coat tails' of defense

Cover up job: How WKU jury rigged a sideline veil to hide hand signals

Elliott Pratt

Covering the Western Kentucky University athletics beat for the Bowling Green Daily News.