

# Carson Hinzman Taking Lessons From “Developmental” Year As He Looks To Regain Starting Center Job



Ohio State offensive lineman Carson Hinzman was the Buckeyes’ starting center for nearly all of last season, but for all that came with lining up at one of the key positions in the trenches and the responsibility that brings, it was a still a season in which Hinzman was looking to learn.

“Playing was super awesome,” he said on Monday. “It was just for me, it was more of a developmental year. Looking into that as I’m going to grow a lot from this, and looking back on that, there’s some mistakes I’m like, ‘There is no way I’d make that right now. There’s no reason why I would do that.’ But I just needed that to develop into what I am today, so I’m super grateful for it.”

It was an up-and-down campaign, with arguably the toughest moment coming as the season reached its conclusion. After starting the first 12 games of the season, Hinzman was benched ahead of the Cotton Bowl in favor of Matthew Jones, and he was left with little to do other than watch as Ohio State’s offensive line struggled to handle business against Missouri.

“The decision that the coaches made, I fully supported (it),” he said. “I fully support what’s best for the team at the time and that’s what it was. I don’t really read anything too much into it. But that’s the decision they made and all I could do is get ready and compete for this next year.”

But the lesson Hinzman took away from his benching has carried into this season. While there’s still a full offseason ahead, he feels he’s already been able to fix many of the mistakes that afflicted him as a first-time starter – and just a redshirt freshman – last season. That shift has been felt from his coaches, who have been impressed with how Hinzman has carried himself this offseason.

“He had a great offseason,” offensive line coach Justin Frye said. “It all started in the weight room with Mick. His weight’s up. He’s thick. He has always been an explosive guy, but playing with a little bit of power behind that, he’s learning to do that.”

Overcoming those challenges will serve Hinzman well as this spring continues and he is locked in a battle with former Alabama center Seth McLaughlin, who transferred to Ohio State this offseason, to deliver snaps for the Buckeyes this season. While Hinzman could have been rattled by head coach Ryan

Day bringing in a three-year starter at his position, Hinzman is embracing the chance to compete as he continues to build a strong offseason.

“He’s been a great addition to the team, a great addition to the offensive line room,” Hinzman said of McLaughlin. “That competition’s been going really well. I think I’ve gotten so much better because of that. I think he can say that he got a lot better as well. Competition breeds really great players, and I think that’s what we’re slowly becoming.”