

Egbuka, Fleming Healthy Entering Season



Ohio State wide receivers Emeka Egbuka and Julian Fleming — who ranked second and third on the team with a combined 1,684 receiving yards and 16 touchdowns last season — both proclaimed they are healthy to start the 2023 season following injury-laden sophomore and junior seasons, respectively.

Egbuka, a second-team preseason AP All-American selection who ranked ninth in the country in both receiving yards (1,151) and catches of 10 or more yards (46) last season, admitted he was nursing a “couple” of injuries throughout the season. These ailments limited the Steilacoom, Wash. native through the spring. However, the 2023 Biletnikoff Award Watch List recipient said he has finally freed himself of these injuries this summer.

“I feel better than I did last year,” Egbuka said. “There were a couple games (last year) where I just had to power through. But this is football, so you’re never going to be 100 percent, but my body’s feeling good again, and I’m just excited to play.”

Fleming, on the other hand, has dealt with a combination of injuries across his first three seasons with the Buckeyes, mostly to his shoulder, which he claims he dislocated “several” times throughout what he calls a “rocky” Ohio State career. Fleming said he found himself popping his shoulder in-and-out all throughout last year, an ailment that he eventually got used to.

“There were definitely some issues with my shoulders, and I dislocated them a bunch of different times, which nobody really ever knew about,” Fleming said. “It’s happened before. It happens a lot in practice. There’s nothing I can do about it. There’s no more damage I can do to it. So it’s kind of just playing through pain and playing to your pain tolerance.”

Despite the injuries, Fleming prevailed through the pain, posting his best collegiate season last year with 34 receptions, 533 yards and six scores in 2022. Now, in his senior season, the former five-star said he is back to full strength.

“I felt like I was 100 percent coming into summer workouts,” said Fleming. “The rehab was great. We

have the best training staff in the country here. So they took it pretty easily. But when we had to ramp it up, we ramped it up. And it's been a really, really good rehab...I'm just constantly taking care of my body the best that I can. Coming in here, getting all the extra treatment, getting all the extra work that I possibly can to stay healthy and constantly be able to be available. You know, Coach Hartline always talks about the best ability is being available. So that's really one of the things I've worked on the most."

Fleming said these types of injuries can help mold student-athletes into stronger, more battle-tested players, however, which is something that can help both he and Egbuka as they embark on their 2023 season.

"Obviously, there's no growth without adversity. So just going through certain things and having things not always go my way, it definitely has made me stronger as a person, I think stronger mentally, definitely. So I'm just excited to work."