

Emeka Egbuka Eyes Impactful Season In 2022



It did not take long for wide receiver Emeka Egbuka to find his niche on the field for Ohio State.

As a freshman, Egbuka showed a knack for returning kicks — leading the Big Ten with an average of 29 yards per return. Egbuka was unable to find the end zone, however, despite several returns being one missed tackle away from him scoring. In his second year in the program, Egbuka is searching for that elusive kick-return touchdown.

“I’m just going to be focusing on making sure we secure the kick and hopefully spring something big,” Egbuka said. “I feel confident with the the returning people that we have on the kickoff return team, and the new people who have stepped up. We had great blocks last year and I’m very confident in us having great blocks again.”

While Egbuka became known for his kick returning prowess last season, he’s also expected to see a boost in playing time at wide receiver. With the departures of Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson, Egbuka — as well as Marvin Harrison Jr. and Julian Fleming — will be counted on to fill their combined 1,994 yards and 25 touchdowns.

As his role in the offense will certainly increase as a sophomore, Egbuka said he’s picked up techniques from his time as a kick returner that he can apply to his receiving game.

“Kick returning and punt returning is something I’ve always done, especially in high school. They’ve really helped with my run after the catch,” Egbuka said. “They especially help me because you’re running full speed, you have to make moves on the fly. It’s normally a one cut and go type of situation and that’s how you spring big ones on offense.”

Throughout the offseason, Egbuka has competed with Fleming for a starting spot alongside Harrison and junior Jaxon Smith-Njigba.

Looking to build off of last season, in which he hauled in nine receptions for 191 yards, Egbuka said he’s improved in a variety of ways ahead of his sophomore campaign.

“I’m more acclimated to the college football experience, it’s way different than high school. Football is football, but at the same time the play speed is way faster,” Egbuka said. “I feel like this year, I’m playing with a lot more confidence and I’m excited to see what the season has in store.”

Egbuka's new-found confidence has been apparent to his teammates. Harrison pointed to Egbuka's ability in the open field as a dynamic factor in his game.

"He's a playmaker," Harrison said. "If you get the ball in his hands, he's going to make something happen. He's at kick return for a reason, he's that kind of player. I don't think there's nothing on the field that he can't do. He's going to be special for sure."