

Evan Pryor Feels “Amazing” In Return From Injury During Last Year’s Fall Camp



This time last year, Ohio State running back Evan Pryor was turning heads in fall camp entering his second season in the program, primed for a larger role with the Buckeyes on the depth chart behind TreVeyon Henderson and Miyan Williams.

Unfortunately for Pryor, those hopes were dashed when he tore his patellar tendon in his left knee just a couple of weeks prior to Ohio State’s opener, ending his season before it started and starting a long recovery process that only finished over the summer.

“It was hard, honestly,” Pryor said Saturday at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. “Everything I did last year building up into when I got hurt, you know, it was huge for me, growing up, maturing and stuff like that. It was hard having to stay at home, watch the games, things like that, having to keep my legs straight for two months and stuff like that.

“It was definitely hard, but it definitely makes you take things like this not for granted,” he continued. “Now I’m out there and everything I do I’m just going hard because I know what it’s like to have it taken from you just like that.”

Pryor has been back on the field for Ohio State this week as fall camp begin, and he said – as well as running backs coach Tony Alford – that he is back to 100 percent, and has been since July. In returning from his injury, Pryor said that is has been “amazing” being at practice.

“I’ve just been taking it in, obviously playing football, but just being out there with the guys, it feels great,” he said. “It’s been a journey, so I’m just glad to be back out here.”

In coming back from his injury, Pryor said it hasn’t been without some hesitation, concerned about the possibility of being hurt again. Early in practice this week, he even ran the same play – a wheel route to the right – that he got injured on, but working through that has helped him to move past the injury.

“I can tell you my first day going out there, I was scared out of my pants, you know, watching every step you take and thinking a lot,” he said. “But you know, going out there (on) day two, just a lot better. I felt more comfortable and just knowing that everything’s going to be okay, I’ve taken the right steps, done the right things throughout my whole rehab/recovery process to be able to go out there with my teammates and not have to worry about it at all.”

Though Pryor was unable to take the field last season and for most of the spring, Alford said he was able to stay engaged with the team throughout the season, making his presence known during meetings.

“(I’ve seen) his mental state when he’s in those meetings and he can answer and rip off the questions and answers immediately,” Alford said. “That shows he’s stayed engaged. He’s never had a cross eye or cross thing to say. He just keeps coming back saying, ‘Give me more,’ and so that’s a testament to who he is as a young man. He’s very valuable in a lot of different ways.”

As Pryor returns to the field, he is coming back to an Ohio State running backs room that looks very different to the one he was running third in last fall camp.

Henderson and Williams are still the top dogs, but injuries to the pair led to increased roles for then-freshman Dallan Hayden and Chip Trayanum, who switched to running back from linebacker midway through the season. Hayden finished the season with 553 yards and five touchdowns on 111 carries – four more totes than Henderson – while Trayanum, though more sparsely used, made an impact in Ohio State’s loss to Michigan, leading the team with 83 yards on 14 carries.

With everyone in the group healthy, carries will be harder to come by with several established options all looking to make an impact for the Buckeyes. But as fall camp begins, Pryor is not worried about who will get carries, but rather how he best improve his game.

“I’m not going to turn my head to anyone else,” Pryor said. “I’m just going to focus on getting better every day, and that’s what all five of us are going to do. We’re going to focus on making ourselves better every day, so just kind of having blinders on. We all continue to carve out a better version of ourselves. When we look up, that’s the best room in the country.”

As stacked a room as Ohio State has – one Alford called “from top to the bottom” the deepest he’s ever had – Pryor said he gave no thought to potentially transferring from Ohio State, even with a lack of clarity around his role for this upcoming season.

“I wasn’t in that headspace. I’ve just been really focused on being here for my teammates,” he said. “They (saw) the journey I went through since last year and how hard I fought to get back and it was just...I don’t know, it wouldn’t sit right with me to just do all that and just leave. Even in the winter, I’ve been doing everything, but I’m out here with these guys, we’re out here going through it together...right now, my mind is just being the best teammate I can and being here for my team right now.”

With Pryor’s injury now behind him, Ohio State is easing him back into action, and he said he trusts the coaches’ decisions to work him back into things. One of the first significant opportunities for Pryor, though, will be Ohio State’s first scrimmage of fall camp next Saturday, and it’s something he said will be “huge” and he continues his return to the field.

“I’m looking forward to that a lot,” he said. “I just want to get back out there. There’s something about being in the locker room the guys, you do things on the field and I don’t know, I’m just ready to show everybody what I’ve been doing for the past 12 months.”