

Fryar's Confidence Growing Ahead Of 2023



For someone who's never played left tackle before, Josh Fryar carried himself with a lot of confidence fielding questions about his transition to the position at player interviews Thursday.

Now in his fourth year at Ohio State, a lot of responsibility will be on his plate as he works to protect either Kyle McCord or Devin Brown's blindside. But learning from those who went before him and working against elite edge rushing talent in practice has him feeling a high level of self-belief.

"I think I'm very prepared (to start at left tackle), honestly," Fryar said. "Hearing everybody talk about it and worrying about it just gets me motivated to step up into that position and succeed."

Fryar is looking to build off his experience from last year. He rotated in as the team's sixth offensive lineman, serving as an extra blocking-specific tight end in certain short-yardage sub-packages.

When Dawand Jones went down with an injury prior to the Indiana game in 2022, Fryar started at right tackle and filled in admirably, particularly as a mauling run blocker.

"He's building his confidence, which will make him play better," offensive line coach Justin Frye said. "If he feels that way and is playing that way, then his play will accelerate and get better. Last year he was sixth (out of the offensive linemen), he was grinding, he was ready every week and we found ways to get him on the field. And when his number was called, he would go in and make those plays. So now, when there's an open spot in front of him, that confidence should propel him into saying, 'This is my spot, I'm going to own it.'"

Despite it being his first start in front of more than 100,000 fans that day against the Hoosiers, Fryar stated his nerves were at a minimum.

"Practice here is harder than the games, honestly," Fryar said. "That's what I think. They put us in those situations and say, 'Hey, it's team pass.' So the defense knows it's pass, you have to protect. For the game, I thought it was a lot more slowed down for me. I thought it was going to be a lot more sped up, but it slowed down for me and I thought it went pretty well."

Of course, that start was on the right side, where Fryar has been the past couple seasons after kicking out from guard. This year he'll switch stances to lock down the offensive line at its marquee position.

"I don't think it's very hard to switch from right to left, just your left foot is back and you have to kick

out of it," Fryar said. "You've just got to work on it and keep going on it."

It hasn't been an easy road for Fryar to arrive at this point.

His freshman season was the roller coaster of college football during COVID-19, then the next year he missed the season with an injury. In 2022, finally in the running for playing time, he sat behind All-Americans Paris Johnson Jr. and Jones.

Still, he took lessons from each stage and from those aforementioned players about the position. Now in 2023, he's ready to emerge.

"It's been a rough few years for me," Fryar said. "But I think now I'm evolving into (the mindset of), 'I can play anywhere.' And it shows people that you can be confident in me to play left tackle. You don't have to worry that left side, like anybody else. I'm going against elite pass rushers like J.T. (Tuimoloau) and Jack (Sawyer) so I feel once I get them down and start beating them, and keep going and keep going and keep going, then I'll be fine.

"Last year I grew the most out of anything. Just sitting back and watching them, watching elite pass protectors, I can get a few things from them and now I'm in that role."

Fans can get their first look at Fryar during OSU's spring game April 15.