Hall Expects To Be “100 Percent” For Peach Bowl

Comparing the back half of the season to the front half for Ohio State second-year defensive tackle Michael Hall Jr. makes it appear as though the Ohio native fell off on paper.

Despite missing a contest against Toledo, Hall racked up 13 tackles with 7½ tackles for loss and 4½ sacks in five contests prior to the Buckeyes’ off week. Since that time, he’s managed just six tackles with no tackles for loss or sacks.

That dip in production can be explained by a dip in snaps, which can in turn be explained by nagging injuries that Hall stayed quiet about during the back half of the season. But with the expectation that he’ll be back to full health for the College Football Playoff Semi-finals, Hall is hoping he can make more of an impact in the postseason.

“I was just dealing with some bang-ups throughout the season, trying to get healthy throughout these weeks leading up to this Georgia game,” Hall said.

“I’ll be 100 percent leading up to the game. I feel like these weeks will allow me to get better.”

Hall logged 25 and 32 snaps, respectively, in OSU’s two contests after the off week but didn’t surpass 18 in its final four games. Truthfully the snap limitations started before that, however.

The most impressive game of Hall’s career to date came against Michigan State, where saw the field for just eight plays. Within that single-digit play count he collected 2½ sacks with an additional sack called back for an illegal hands to the face penalty on a teammate.

“Coming out here and trying to dominate coming off that win last year, it’s just a blessing,” Hall said afterward. “I’m just trying to take advantage again.”

Hall noted last week that he was dealing with a lot of bumps and bruises at that time, though he’d

originally stated after the game that his injury wasn't really an issue. Defensive coordinator Jim Knowles indicated otherwise a few weeks later when asked why Ty Hamilton had been the team's starter at three-technique defensive tackle rather than Hall.

"To compare him to what's happening with Mike is wrong because Mike has really battled injuries," Knowles said. "It's not so much a question of saving him, it's just kind of week-to-week how Mike is feeling and what he can do. What he can do on a given Saturday, he'll give us everything he has. But he's really fought through some things."

With the way he's kept his injuries under wraps, it can be hard to tell exactly how much they've affected Hall. He's maintained a mindset of keeping the media closed off from that part of his play.

It seems evident that he'll be back to full strength by the end of December, however.

"You would be surprised what these guys go through behind closed doors," Hall said. "Even in these interviews, you can't say everything you're going through. You've got to keep that to yourself. But it definitely is a motivating factor, I'm going through something but I have to fight."

It's been a frustrating back half of the season for Hall behind those closed doors, he indicated. It's created a drive within him to regain the edge he once had.

"I'm anxious, I'm ready to get back on the field," Hall said. "I'm ready to unleash and just go crazy."

If Hall can find his early-season health and form against Georgia, it would go a long way in helping Ohio State in its efforts to upset the nation's No. 1 team Dec. 31.