

Harrison Jr. Eager To See Action In Slot



Ohio State junior wide receiver and first-team AP Preseason All-American Marvin Harrison Jr. is widely regarded as one of the premier players in the nation and a potential top-three pick in next year's NFL Draft, but the hype has not prevented him from looking for ways to improve his game.

Harrison Jr., who ranked sixth and fourth in the nation with 1,263 receiving yards and 14 touchdowns, respectively, expressed interest in playing at the slot position at times this season on Tuesday, saying that it will increase his involvement in the passing game and show off his strengths as a run blocker. Last season, the 6-foot-4 wide receiver mostly operated on the outside, with fellow first-team AP Preseason All-American Emeka Egbuka manning the slot.

"Even from a run-blocking standpoint, I think that's where (I) can kind of come into play," Harrison said. "We ask our slots to sometimes dig out linebackers, block d-ends. So I think I definitely can do that in the offense. But then just also just being a mismatch. I mean, I like my chances against the safety anytime. So I think it definitely brings a different element to the offense."

Harrison Jr. said he has seen the slot receiver position serve as an integral part of the Buckeyes' recent surge of success on offense throughout the past several years, as it has allowed former Ohio State wideouts such as Parris Campbell, K.J. Hill, Garrett Wilson and many others to accentuate their skills on the field.

"I mean, when you just look at the slot receivers in Ohio State's over the past couple years, there's a lot of success," Harrison Jr. said. "Dating back to K.J. Hill, Parris Campbell, Jaxon (Smith-Njibga), Garrett (Wilson) for one year and Emeka (Egbuka) last year. So I think the slot is a very important piece in our offense."

According to head coach Ryan Day, incorporating Harrison Jr. at the slot will serve as a way for his All-American wideout to be even more heavily featured within the offense, as it will neutralize teams from completely taking away the Buckeyes' top target by way of double-teams on the outside. Day admitted that it will be impossible to prevent Harrison Jr. from seeing more than one defender on him this season, but that will not serve as an excuse for either of his two quarterbacks to reduce his touches.

"We can't, at the end of the game, look down at the stat sheet here and say, 'well, Marvin touched it once or twice,' Day said at Big Ten Media Days on July 26. "That's not acceptable. We have to figure out ways to get him the ball. But at the same time, if Marvin's, going three-by-one in the boundary, they are

going to double-team him. There's not a lot of people that can cover him. There's probably not some people in the NFL that can cover him. He's that talented of a player. We're very fortunate to have him."

"So what does that mean?" Day continued. "Well, there's going to be times where he's going to dictate coverage...It's going to be interesting to see how teams play us. But there's going to be times where you know, the quarterbacks are going have to find the one-on-one. And that's part of it. But we also need to do a great job on the offensive staff of finding ways to get touches to our playmakers."