

Jaxon Smith-Njigba Reflects On “Very Frustrating” Last Season At NFL Combine



Speaking at the NFL Scouting Combine on Friday and for the first time since suffering a hamstring injury that kept him out for almost all of his final season in college, Ohio State wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba said it was a “frustrating year” as he dealt with the first long-term injury of his playing career.

“Never really had an injury that set me out for games or even practices or stuff like that,” Smith-Njigba said. “But I feel like I’m going to come out a better person, better man, better player. I’m definitely thankful. Just looking at it as a positive. I think it will be beneficial for me at the end of the day.”

Smith-Njigba appeared in just two games last season for Ohio State, playing in the first half of the season opener against Notre Dame before suffering his hamstring injury. Smith-Njigba returned several weeks later when the Buckeyes hosted Iowa, but again, Smith-Njigba only played in the first half of what ended up being his final appearance for Ohio State.

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day and his staff expressed optimism throughout the season that Smith-Njigba would return, and while Smith-Njigba said he wanted to be on the field, he also said on Friday that he could have been more patient in his recovery.

“Didn’t know too much about hamstrings, never really dealt with one,” he said. “So wish I had more information, wish I would have definitely dealt with it better.”

Despite the disappointment of his junior season, his talent was still evident through his two seasons and change at Ohio State. He finished his career with 1,698 receiving yards and 10 touchdowns, including a single-season record for the Buckeyes with 1,606 receiving yards and 95 receptions, and setting single-game records for receptions (15), receiving yards (347) and touchdowns (three), all in the 2021 season.

That’s not to mention the numerous highlight catches during his career, all that contribute to Smith-

Njigba arguing his playmaking ability in the upcoming NFL Draft is “second-to-none.”

“I see myself as a top-five player, not just receiver,” he said. “I see myself as a top-five player in this draft, just being able to make plays and given the opportunities. You throw me the ball seven-to-nine times, I can win you the game. That speaks for itself.”

“I’m ready to show people what I can do,” he continued.

And while Smith-Njigba is looking forward to boosting his draft stock, arguably the most notable drill – the 40-yard dash – will have to wait until Ohio State’s Pro Day on March 22, as Smith-Njigba said he has not had time to train for the drill.