

Jelani Thurman Garnering Respect From Teammates And Coaches During Spring Camp



Ohio State is well-stocked at tight end entering the 2023 campaign.

The Buckeyes returned incumbent starter Cade Stover, who produced one of the most prolific seasons by an Ohio State tight end in recent memory last season, and a pair of solid depth pieces in Gee Scott Jr. and Joe Royer from last season. While Ohio State kept much of the room intact from last season, outside of position coach Kevin Wilson's departure, the Buckeyes also added even more depth at the position, signing Fairburn (Ga.) Langston Hughes four-star tight end Jelani Thurman in the 2023 class.

Thurman opted to enroll early at Ohio State, joining the Buckeyes for spring camp, and in just a short period of time has flashed his potential to head coach Ryan Day and many others in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

"(He's) working hard," Day said on Friday. "He's out here every day and shows toughness. He kinda got banged up a little bit but continues to practice. He has a very high ceiling."

Although just in his first spring camp, Thurman has already proved that he's ready for the big-time nature of playing at a program like Ohio State. On Friday, Thurman became the second member of the 2023 class — joining wide receiver Carnell Tate — to shed his black stripe and affirm his status as a Buckeye.

While Thurman has stood out on the practice field throughout spring camp, showing flashes of his potential as a pass-catching threat — standing at 6-6 — as well as a blocker, tight ends coach Keenan Bailey pointed to Thurman's attention to detail away from the gridiron as a defining trait in the young tight end.

"The best thing he's done is his off-the-field habits," Bailey said. "Jelani and Carnell are two of the first guys in here every day. I'll go into my office at the end of the night and Jelani is in there with our GA Sean Binks, who's one heck of a coach, and they're going over tomorrow's script or they're watching film learning new things.

"Yes, he's a big, physical and athletic dude and he loves football," he continued. "But the best thing Jelani has been doing has been his off-the-field habits."

It's clear what Thurman brings to the table, as his 6-6 frame makes him a large receiving target as well as an imposing blocker. In his senior season at Langston Hughes High School, Thurman hauled in 36 receptions for 582 yards and 12 touchdowns, showcasing his abilities as a receiver.

While Thurman's size has stood out to those in attendance at camp, Bailey made it clear that he needs to build on it in order to maximize potential. Bailey pointed to Thurman's willingness to receive coaching from both the staff and his veteran teams as an encouraging sign for the tight end's development.

"God gave him the talent, we challenge our guys to get skill and discipline," Bailey said. "He's doing things now on film, because he followed the lead of Cade, Gee and Joe, he's doing things now habitually — finishing plus-two, going two extra seconds on blocks — and that you don't really see early enrollees do."

Thurman's ability has stood out to Scott, who has taken Thurman under his wing during his short time on campus.

"He's big and strong," Scott said. "His ceiling is really high. He's almost so big and long that his coordination is catching up, and I think once he does get there and he becomes fundamentally sound and takes some years of coaching, his ceiling is really high."

"The sky is the limit for him if he just keeps taking coaching and keeps putting days in front of the others."

To Stover, Thurman has embraced what it means to be an Ohio State tight end and is continuing to gain comfort as a Buckeye despite being on campus for a short period of time.

"He's a good kid," Stover said. "It's hard when you come here young and he's embraced that and done a good job of growing up."