

Mitchell Melton Feels “More Renewed Than Ever” At Spring Practice, More Comfortable At Defensive End



Mitchell Melton came to Ohio State as a four-star recruit out of Maryland in the class of 2020, listed as the No. 344 overall prospect in the country as a linebacker who projected to contribute for the Buckeyes in the future.

Then in the 2021 season, he tore his ACL and had to have surgery, missing the year. The season after that, the exact same thing happened and he tore his ACL again, a devastating blow for the third-year player.

But now Melton is coming back from those injuries and is looking to contribute to what looks to be a powerful defense for the Buckeyes going into the 2024 season. He said last year, since he hadn't been able to actually play football for so long, it felt like he was back in his freshman year learning how to play at the college level again.

“Now I feel more renewed than ever,” Melton said. “And I’m more comfortable in the position I’m playing now. I got in a lot of extra work with the guys and Coach (Larry Johnson) off the field, so it’s definitely helped me get a into a more comfortable spot on the field.”

Melton was listed as a linebacker coming out of high school, but had the size and athleticism to be able to play either there or on the defensive line, which is where he’s seemingly ended up at Ohio State as an edge rusher this offseason, and he said he feels at home at the position now.

“These past two years have definitely been a learning curve,” Melton said. “But now more than ever I’m comfortable where I’m at and with what I need to do and my skill set.”

He said has taken him some time to be able to mentally get back to a place where he feels comfortable playing hard because of the two injuries since he doesn’t want anything like that to happen to him again.

“It definitely took a second to trust myself and my body because for the past couple of years, it didn’t help me out in the best way obviously,” Melton said. “It’s very mental. I found that every day,

counteracting that fear and that doubt of if my body's going to hold up. But I think my mentality right now is really good."

But on Student Appreciation Day, when students and media were able to go into the Woody, Melton shined on the end of the defensive line, seemingly over the mental holdup, and he said he's ready to try to contribute to the team this season.

"For the majority of the spring I've been feeling more confident in my abilities," Melton said. "But even with everything that's happened in the past I still think I have a lot to give to this program. That kind of showed on Saturday where I just let loose a little bit and played to the best of my ability."

With the possibility of up to 16 games in the college football season, even though the defensive line seems set with Jack Sawyer and J.T. Tuimoloau returning for one more season, the starters might need more breaks than ever before so that they can stay fresh for when it matters most. Melton is one of many players who will get the chance to contribute on the field this season.

He never wavered in his intent to work back from his injuries and come back to Ohio State, and he's hoping that pays off for him this season.

"I love this sport too much to do that, and I love the guys around me," he said. "That's the biggest thing that brought me back was just, 'I can't do this to them.' I know what we have, what we can be on the field, so I'm going to do everything I can to get back on the field."