

Royer Building Off Tumultuous 2022



The 2022 football season was a tumultuous one for Joe Royer.

He dealt with injuries that sidelined and limited him, sure, but his lost playing time pales in comparison to the loss of his mother, Michelle, who passed away in September.

“Last year was one of the hardest years of my life, dealing with injury and then my mom passing,” Royer said. “It was a tough year. But right now I’m in a good spot mentally and physically. When I look back and think about my mom, I’m glad I got to spend that time with her and that’s what I bank on, the good memories we had.”

The junior tight end enters 2023 with an increased motivation to take the next step in his football career, looking to build off the experience he gained at the end of the 2022 season in the College Football Playoff semifinal against Georgia.

“I’ve had a different outlook on life, honestly,” Royer said. “I don’t take things and people for granted as much as I used to. I’m trying to be the best person I can be and the best football player I can be, because that’s what she would want.”

Royer accumulated 28 snaps in the contest with a national championship berth on the line, catching one pass for nine yards.

His increased usage came after Cade Stover, the team’s starting tight end, went down with a back injury in the first quarter. Royer called it a “surreal” experience to play in that contest, though he felt for his teammate and friend.

“You’ve got to be ready every moment,” Royer said. “You’ve got to prepare mentally and physically. If you’re not getting physical reps, you’ve got to make sure you’re staying ready with mental reps, and I was lucky to have been doing that.”

Stover, a senior, has seen a great deal of progress from Royer in his time at Ohio State.

"That's one of my best friends," Stover said. "He's a really, really good kid. He's grown up a lot, and he's going to continue to grow. He's just scratching at how good he can really be. I think you can see that."

With Stover returning to start again at tight end for OSU, Royer feels comfortable settling into and maximizing a role as the team's backup. He'll compete with junior Gee Scott, junior Sam Hart, sophomore Bennett Christian and freshman Jelani Thurman for playing time.

"I'm hoping and trying to be that second guy to complement him when we go 12 (personnel), maybe if he needs a breather I'll go in and be fine," Royer said.

Newly-promoted Ohio State tight ends coach Keenan Bailey expects Royer to be better than ever in 2023. He's already seen it through winter workouts and spring practice.

"This version of Joe Royer is the best that I've seen," Bailey said. "I think it goes back to eight weeks before spring ball, he's added 12 pounds. He was bragging that he's the heaviest tight end in the room. But I think those extra 10 pounds of muscle have been helping out Joe. He's doing some things now in the blocking game and the route running game that maybe he didn't even do a year ago."