

Tyler Friday Stepping Up As Leader In Return To The Field



At several points last season, the inclusion of defensive end Tyler Friday would have been a welcome addition to the defense. The then-fourth-year player would have provided an additional option off the edge, one that, when healthy, has provided a boost for Ohio State's defense.

But Friday missed all of last season, suffering a torn ACL in last season's fall camp with the season just weeks away. He stayed off the field last year while rehabbing his injury, but with kickoff just over two weeks away, Friday is back and ready to make an impact for Ohio State.

"I'm better all around," he said. "Just changing my body, being able to get a little faster, a little stronger. These past couple of years have made me develop in a lot of ways."

It wasn't easy getting back to the field after his season-ending injury. Let alone after missing some additional time during the 2020 season, meaning Friday hasn't been fully healthy since his sophomore season in 2019 in which he finished with two sacks, eight tackles and a fumble recovery in seven games. But Friday's recovery was made easier given the support he received from Ohio State and the brotherhood.

"It was very difficult, but I've got a great team here full of brothers," he said. "Instead of one brother, I got over 100 here at Ohio State," he said. "During the tough times, I just leaned on them, my family, kept my faith in God and I was able to get through it."

For all the growth he's made as an athlete since he last played, Friday has also taken significant steps as a leader for Ohio State, named as one of the Buckeyes' six captains for this upcoming season.

"It's a big honor," he said. "It was something I wasn't even expecting myself. To come off an injury last year, to get that kind of title this year is a blessing."

Defensive line coach Larry Johnson said he saw Friday as a leader at Ohio State before his injuries, but in his time spent away from the field, he displayed all the qualities of a captain for the Buckeyes.

"I think what turned the table when he got hurt was how hard he worked in the rehab to get back to where he was," Johnson said. "If you saw him every morning, every day, trying to get himself back, that was impressive to a lot of kids. It set the bar for who he was as a young man, and I think that's why his

teammates voted him his captain.”

Friday will return to a large rotation on the defense line, with Zach Harrison, Javontae Jean-Baptiste, Jack Sawyer, J.T. Tuimoloau and several freshman all competing for snaps. While the perception is that he might have gotten passed up by the rising sophomores, Johnson expected Friday to have a big role this season not just on the field, but as a leader for the Buckeyes.

“He can provide a lot. We missed Tyler last year,” Johnson said. “Tyler is really strong at the point of attack. He plays hard. He’s physical. He cares. We missed that last year. We miss missed that leadership a little bit, too, because he was a strong leader in the room. When you sit in the back of the room, you can have a tendency to be quiet because you’re not playing, and now he’s a voice. I think that’s what we need.”