

Wilson Staying Grounded Amid Lofty Second-Year Expectations With Jets



Following a rookie campaign where New York Jets wideout Garrett Wilson logged over 1,000 receiving yards and earned The Associated Press 2022 NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year award, many expect the Ohio State product to emerge as one of the league's top young pass catchers in 2023.

Wilson's potential is especially felt within the Jets' locker room, with many teammates — most notably new signal caller and four-time NFL MVP Aaron Rodgers — likening the former Buckeye to some of the league's best.

"There's another 17 (Davante Adams) I played with for a long time who does it better than anybody," Rodgers said on the Pat McAfee show on May 2. "The explosiveness, in and out of breaks, to the 17 here, is pretty similar."

Although the 22-year-old has received much praise and attention to start his NFL career, it has not distracted him from committing to the same approach that allowed him to achieve his childhood dream.

"(I'm) always only focused on what you have to deal with at that moment," Wilson said on SiriusXM NFL Radio's "Press Coverage" last Saturday. "For me, I was always obsessed with taking advantage of the opportunity that I had and making sure I get the most out of what work I am doing at that moment so it can lead to success down the road. And you know that's coming, but you have to put it in at the moment, and that's always been my mind-set. I never really let any of this stuff get to my head. So for me, it's just what got me here, why I am where I am at right now, and staying true to that. I think it works."

Wilson, who begins his second training camp with Jets on July 19, told Sirius XM's Dan Leberfeld that he has worked throughout the offseason to learn the new offensive system in place for the 2023 season. New York will employ a different play caller in former Denver Broncos head coach Nathaniel Hackett, who took over as offensive coordinator after the team relieved Mike LaFleur of his duties in January.

"There are a few nuances that you just have to be keen on when you're a skill player on the (new) offense, especially with someone like Aaron Rodgers at quarterback," Wilson said. "For me, it's just been learning as much as possible. It's obviously been a little transition, but the fact that I have a familiarity with the West Coast offense...it makes it easier on me. So I'm doing everything I can, just taking it day-by-day, trying to put in what I can to make sure that I'm doing my job to the best of my abilities."

The Austin, Texas native said he has made a seamless transition into the new offensive scheme by leaning on the tutelage and experience of veteran Jets receivers Allen Lazard and Randall Cobb. The two wideouts combined to catch 136 passes from Rodgers from 2019-2021, when Hackett served as Green Bay's offensive coordinator.

"First off, they're great dudes and great players," Wilson said. "I'm really excited to have them around. With the transition of the offense, it just made it super easy on me to have people in the room that did a good amount of time in those systems. And for me, that's everything. I'm trying to learn a lot fast, and they're making that a whole lot easier. Even with the vets we have in the room, it's just different."

While Wilson is leaning on Cobb and Lazard to learn Hackett's offensive scheme, he is also making a concerted effort to develop chemistry with the 39-year-old Rodgers, who New York acquired from the Packers on April 24. This is something he thinks they achieved during organized team activities and minicamp earlier this year both on and off the field.

"When you have a new signal caller coming in, you just want to be able to get those reps and bookmark some certain routes together," Wilson said. "And we got a chance to do that. So that was awesome to be able to throw with him and go against the defense with (Rodgers) leading the charge, and see how he sees the defense and spend time with him in the film room, all those things...We have a good small sample size together, but I feel like we took full advantage of the time we did have together, that's all we could do."

Wilson's efforts to familiarize himself with Rodgers and Hackett have impressed members of the Jets' staff and teammates before the start of training camp. This, along with his already elite route running and catching ability, has created high expectations for the second-year wideout.

"He's starved for knowledge," Hackett said. "Understanding not just the routes but how he fits within each concept that we do. He's got some amazing body control. His ability to get up on defenders and move them and then, even when the ball might not be perfectly placed, twerk his body into different positions is very special."

"At least one time a practice he does something that I kind of look back at (the coaches) and whoever is watching and go, 'Wow,'" Rodgers said.

Despite the high expectations for Wilson entering his second NFL season, the former Buckeye is continuing to ignore the noise and focus on what only he can control. This is a mind-set that has caught the eye of those within the Jets' locker room before the start of training camp.

"The challenge for second-year players is balancing the success they had as rookies and the newfound success, the social life, the money, all of it, and how do you balance it to keep the main thing the main thing, which is attacking football day in and day out," Jets head coach Robert Saleh told the media on May 31. "He's a juicy route runner, he's gotten a lot stronger, and his mental makeup, his internal drive, is second-to-none. So I'm excited for him this year."