

Xavier Johnson “Honored” To Continue Block O Tradition At Ohio State



Like Jonathon Cooper, Thayer Munford and Kamryn Babb before him, nobody else made more sense to become the recipient of Ohio State Block O jersey this season than wide receiver Xavier Johnson.

Johnson has been a noted leader for Ohio State entering his sixth season with the program, but it has not been a journey without struggles. Along with switching positions several times throughout his career with the Buckeyes, Johnson – a former walk-on – did not earn his scholarship with the program until midway through his fourth season in Columbus.

“He’s played in so many different position rooms – corner, running back, he moved to receiver – and he just always kept working. Never complained about anything,” wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr. said. “Just his leadership on and off the field, he’s a guy that you want leading the team. He’s just a great example for myself and just the rest of the guys on the team, so he’s just the perfect person to wear the Block O.”

But, those hardships did not stop Johnson from becoming a valued member of the team, and after going through those obstacles to begin his Ohio State career, he said everything that’s come to him since – including the Block O jersey as well as being named a captain – is all the better for it.

“I think that it makes it that much sweeter,” he said. “I think that going through all that and maturing in the way that I did and growing in the way that I did it, I wouldn’t change it for the world.”

In being named the Block O recipient – just the fourth in team history – Johnson said he was “overcome with emotion” when reflecting on his career and what brought him to that point.

“Everything that I’ve been through with teammates, with guys, I think all that emotion kind of came to the forefront when I heard my name called,” he said. “Because when I reflect on my career here, it hasn’t gone exactly how I wanted, exactly how I would have drawn it up. But it’s been beautiful in its own right.

“When my name was announced, when Coach (Ryan) Day kind of honored me with that honor of being the Block O and representing this university, it was something that I definitely didn’t take lightly and I

was extremely honored to receive. ... I'm just honored to continue that tradition of excellence that the Block O award winners have set the standard of in the past."

In addition to impacting the team as a leader off the field, Johnson will hope to continue making strides on the field. His first shot will be this Saturday at Indiana, a team that Johnson had the best performance of his career against last season, rushing for a 71-yard touchdown, hauling in two receptions for 47 yards and recovering a blocked punt.

"My focus is on that," he said. "My focus is on going 1-0 as a team and getting the ball rolling in the right way. We're gonna go out there, put our best foot forward and I think we're going to like what we see."