

Denzel Burke Was Out With Injury Against Texas, Will Be Ready To Go In National Championship



When senior cornerback Denzel Burke was out for the second half of the Cotton Bowl with sophomore Jermaine Mathews Jr. taking his place, there were questions about the health of Burke or whether he was benched.

Head coach Ryan Day cleared that up in his first availability before the National Championship game, saying that Burke was out with an injury, but he will be ready to go on Jan. 20 against Notre Dame.

“He’ll be available for the next game. He was dealing with an upper extremity issue that we felt like at the time was the right thing to do to hold him. Obviously we listen to the doctors and we get the feedback from Denzel, and we felt like Jermaine was playing well at the time. So that was the decision that was made. But Denzel will be ready to play in this game.”

Day didn’t specify when the injury happened, just that it was the reason that Burke was held out.

But with Burke out, Mathews was able to get into the game and prove that he is ready to compete against the best competition at the college level, helping the Buckeyes to a 28-14 win over Texas and allowing just two catches for 7 yards, although he did have a pass interference penalty called against him just a few plays before Jack Sawyer’s scoop-and-score.

But even though it sounds like Burke will be available for the title game, even if Mathews does have to slot in again, that’s not something that would concern the Buckeyes, since he has performed so well whenever he does get into the game.

“I think everybody feels comfortable putting Jermaine in the game based on the way that he’s played this year, the way that he’s practiced this year,” Day said. “I say this all the time; you have an opportunity to earn trust in your coaches and your teammates every day, and when you get to this point in January, this is from the whole offseason, all of preseason and during the season, and we’ve talked about how depth is going to be important in this moment, a ton throughout the season, and Jermaine

has done a good job.

“I think everybody trusts the fact that when he goes in the game, he’s going to do his job, and that’s it. I felt like he played well. He graded out a champion. He’s a very competitive player. He loves the competition. He loves his teammates. He’s a gritty type of guy that loves being a Buckeye, loves his teammates, loves, again, to compete. When his number is called, he’ll be ready to make a play in this game, as well.”