

Emeka Egbuka Could See Increased Role Against Red Wolves



With the injury to Jaxon Smith-Njigba and the breakout performance of fifth-year wideout Xavier Johnson against Notre Dame, it felt as though Emeka Egbuka's nine-catch, 90-yard outing went under the radar.

Egbuka was a safety blanket for Stroud, who targeted the sophomore 11 times after Smith-Njigba was forced to leave the game due to a leg injury. Egbuka answered the call, bring in the aforementioned nine receptions as well as a 31-yard touchdown grab, Ohio State's lone points in the first half, and helping lead the Buckeye offense through a tumultuous period.

Saturday against Arkansas State provides another opportunity for Egbuka to shine, as Ohio State could again be without Smith-Njigba as well as third-year Julian Fleming.

"I don't think it changes too much," Egbuka said. "You know, at the end of the day, football is football. I've played it my whole life, so has everyone else on the roster. We're going to go out there Saturday and every Saturday to come, and we're just going to play the game that we love.

"It doesn't matter if you're the main target on the offense, you're just there to do your job," he continued. "And if you do your job well, then it's going to be a good day."

Smith-Njigba - who was seen in pads leaving practice on Wednesday - could play against the Red Wolves, as well as Fleming, who was a game-time decision against Notre Dame, though Day said Fleming was close to play against the Irish.

It is a question though of whether this is the right game to bring them back. Day said he is hopeful to have both Smith-Njigba and Fleming back this week, but that they will listen to the medical staff and not rush anything, indicating that it could be longer before they see the field again.

Of course, it could just be a matter of time against Arkansas State before the starters see themselves off to the bench, rendering it a moot point which of Ohio State's starters play for the Buckeyes. At that point, Egbuka's day will likely be over, giving way to any one of Ohio State's talented backups to get see the field.

“Emeka, he got to show a little bit of what he can do even though he can do more,” Stroud said Tuesday. “I feel like even in our pass game, he fits it perfectly, him and Marvin (Harrison Jr.). I feel like that first game put a little taste in people’s mouths of what we can do a little bit. But I feel like we’ll do even more and more with the work we put in.”