

Jackson Growing Into Veteran Role On Offensive Line



As a first-year starter last season, Donovan Jackson spent much of his time alongside future NFL players in tackle Paris Johnson Jr. and center Luke Wypler — who both declared for the draft in the aftermath of Ohio State’s Peach Bowl loss to Georgia on Dec. 31, 2022.

Now with Johnson and Wypler, as well as tackle Dawand Jones, off to the professional ranks, Jackson steps in as one of the veteran leaders on the offensive line.

“It’s weird to say that I’m a veteran to this offensive line,” Jackson said. “All throughout the offseason, (strength and conditioning coach Mickey Marotti) and the entire strength staff, and now the offensive staff, were like, ‘Hey, you’re a veteran now. You have to do things the right way the first time and lead the young guys to do the right things so they’re not repeat offenders.’”

“It’s definitely a new role to try to show everyone what to do,” he continued. “It’s not easy to come to Ohio State. High school to Ohio State is a whole different speed, so I’m just trying to teach the young guys to make sure everyone is on the same page.”

As Ohio State lost both of its starting tackles and center, the possibility of Jackson sliding over tackle was floated around between him and offensive line coach Justin Frye. While Jackson displayed a willingness to play wherever was needed of him, he and Frye ultimately decided to keep him inside at guard.

“He was just asking me where I was at and we just had an honest conversation,” Jackson said. “We just put what’s best for the offensive line (at the forefront). I’m an offensive lineman, I’m not classified as an interior or anything like that, I’ll play wherever I have to play.”

During their conversations, Frye said Jackson’s focus was primarily on building the best unit up front for the Buckeyes — whether that involved him making a position change or not.

“He wanted to know what the plan was and what we see with him, because just like all of the guys, Donovan is an elite-level player and he wants to play that way,” Frye said. “Donovan is also a team guy, so he wants to do what would be best for the team. Our conversation off of that was really about what do we see as our plan.”

“Donovan could play all five positions, he’s that athletic. He could play outside, inside,” he continued. “Right now, he’s in a really good groove at the guard position.”

While Jackson will be a much different situation this season as one of the two established offensive linemen — joining fellow guard Matthew Jones — he emphasized that he’s looking to build off of last season and continue to grow at the guard position.

“I’m my biggest critic. It’s something that Coach Frye told me to not be so hard on myself for, but I definitely think I could have done way better (last season),” Jackson said. “They are a lot of instances where if I had done something different, the play would have improved by another five yards or we would have had touchdowns instead of a first down.

“I look at myself very critically,” he continued. “I appreciate the stuff I do well, but I’m more critical of myself and what I can do better.”