

# Jeremiah Smith Ready To 'Put On A Show' In National Championship Game



After a historic regular season in which freshman wide receiver Jeremiah Smith broke Ohio State's freshman receptions, receiving yards and receiving touchdown records, he somehow found a new gear in the College Football Playoffs. The South Florida native went for a combined 13 catches, 290 receiving yards, and four touchdowns in his first two playoff games against Tennessee and Oregon, leading his team to two blowout wins.

Smith didn't have nearly the same production in Ohio State's 28-14 win over Texas, instead he was held to just one catch for 3 yards. According to Smith, the best he could do was serve as a decoy after facing bracket coverages throughout the game.

"You watch the film, they doubled, tripled me, dropping into flats, as well," Smith said during media day two days before Ohio State's national championship game against Notre Dame, "But just being a decoy out there helped us win the game for sure."

Even though the Big Ten Receiver of The Year was held to one catch, the attention he demanded allowed sophomore receiver Carnell Tate to haul in seven catches for 87 yards. The decoy role might not be ideal, but Smith is willing to do whatever he needs to help the Buckeyes capture their first national championship since 2014.

"I can't be selfish," Smith said. "We've got other guys on the team that can do what I can do, but I'm not a selfish player. It's not just all about me. It's about the whole team, as well. If I've got to be a decoy this game, as well, all I want to do is win, so if that's what it takes, to be a decoy to win the game, that's what I'll do, it doesn't matter."

On paper though, Smith shouldn't get the same amount of attention in the national championship that he received against Texas. The Fighting Irish have primarily used man coverage throughout the season, and as Smith pointed out, decision-makers like defensive coordinator Al Golden have indicated there's no plan to change their strategy in the national championship.

"Playing man on man against Ohio State receivers, it's something crazy," Smith said. "We're just ready for the challenge. They said they're not changing their game plan, but we've got to go out there and show them the reason why (they shouldn't) play man-on-man."

The man-to-man coverage, isn't a direct path to touchdowns for Smith and the rest of the Buckeyes' receiving corps though. Led by Freshman All-American cornerback Leonard Moore, the Fighting Irish have only conceded 194.7 passing yards per game in their three playoff games.

Despite the talent on the other side of the field, and his young age as a true freshman, Smith is confident in his abilities to play well in a game he's always dreamed of playing in.

"It's very special for me just being a freshman, playing on the national stage," Smith said. "Competing for a national title is something that I dreamed of as a very young kid. I'm just happy to be here, and I just can't wait to put on a show Monday for you guys."