

Julian Fleming Looks To Carry Strong Offseason Into Regular Season



The 'Iron Buckeye' is used by the Ohio State coaching staff to recognize the program's hardest workers during the summer. To head coach Ryan Day, nobody fit that mold better than third-year wide receiver Julian Fleming.

Fleming, who has battled with an injured shoulder during his first two seasons with the program, was named an 'Iron Buckeye' alongside six of his teammates, thanks to what Day described as "the best offseason to this point" for the receiver. Day added that Fleming improved the most of anyone on the team during the summer.

While Day spoke highly of Fleming's offseason approach, the Catawissa, Pa., native identified a need to shift his mindset, which led to his summer of improvement.

"I felt like it was time to really grow up and start taking things a lot more seriously," Fleming said. "It was definitely a process, it took a little bit of time, but now I feel like I'm really locked in and committed to Ohio State football."

Fleming joined the Ohio State program as the No. 1 receiver and No. 3 overall player in the 2020 recruiting class, according to 247Sports' composite score. Since he arrived in Columbus, however, Fleming has been unable to carve out a consistent role on the field — primarily due to his injury history.

Across his first two seasons, Fleming has played in 15 of a possible 21 games while primarily slotting in as a depth-piece behind star wideouts Chris Olave, Garrett Wilson and Jaxon Smith-Njigba. He's hauled in 19 receptions for 160 yards and a touchdown to this point in his Ohio State career.

"I've had a couple bumps and bruises along the way, a couple of things that have held me back," Fleming said. "Honestly, there was just a lot of outside stuff that was just affecting me in different ways. It was finally good to just cut out all of the outside noise and all of the outside drama that takes place in college football and I really just locked in here."

In the Buckeyes' second scrimmage during fall camp, Day said Fleming's shoulder, once again, became dislocated. However, that didn't end his afternoon. According to Day, Fleming popped his shoulder back in place before returning to the field and hauling in two touchdowns against the Buckeyes' defense.

“Obviously, (dislocating your shoulder) stinks. It’s not fun,” Fleming said. “But, it’s just part of the game and stuff happens. Sometimes you just have to roll with the punches. Just having that happen and being able to come back in right away and continue to play on it, it was a little bit of a confidence boost. But, obviously we’re going to take some precautionary measures.”

With nine days until Ohio State’s season-opening game against Notre Dame on Sept. 3, Fleming is competing with sophomore Emeka Egbuka for the right to start alongside Smith-Njigba and fellow perimeter receiver Marvin Harrison Jr.

While the expectations have risen for Fleming ahead of the 2022 campaign, he’s just focused on being the best version of himself once the season starts.

“I like to cut out expectations to be honest with you. I really dwelled on expectations for the past two years and sometimes your work ethic, I don’t want to say your expectations get killed, doesn’t meet your expectations and I feel like mine didn’t at that time,” Fleming said. “Right now, I feel like my work ethic is matching my expectations. I’m really excited.”