

Matthew Jones Braved 102-Degree Fever In Notre Dame Win



Matthew Jones' temperature read 102 degrees Friday night before he took the field against Notre Dame.

Ohio State's fifth-year starting guard described his condition as "rough," though that might be an understatement.

"Just very dehydrated, exhausted very fast," Jones said. "Put a lot of toll on me, but it's alright."

Despite those feelings, Jones managed to push through, and his play coupled with that of Ohio State's offensive line and running backs catalyzed a win for the Buckeyes over the Fighting Irish Sept. 3.

Jones isn't a stranger to struggle in his Ohio State career.

He had to wait until his fourth year to see the field in a meaningful capacity, despite being a consensus top-70 prospect coming out of New York. In 2021 he rotated in as the Buckeyes' sixth offensive lineman, at times replacing one of their guards. In this, his fifth year, he finally got his chance to start.

"It's very important to have those guys in a program, and (it's) becoming more difficult," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said. "But hats off to those guys for sticking it out, and now they're getting to see all the sacrifice they have made pay off."

As far as dealing with the adversity he faced with his illness against the Fighting Irish, Jones' mindset played a larger role than anything else, he noted.

"It's more of a mental thing," Jones said. "Sometimes you've just got to overcome it. Like, 'Oh, can I really give three hours, four hours in it? Yeah, I believe I can do that within myself.' My body can tell me I can't, my mind can think positive, just go."

Jones' play and that of the other offensive linemen played a key role in Ohio State's 21-10 win over the Golden Domers.

The Buckeyes trailed 10-7 late in the third quarter. A touchdown strike from third-year quarterback C.J. Stroud to graduate receiver Xavier Johnson gave them a 14-10 lead with 17 seconds left in the

penultimate period.

Ohio State's next possession, it ground out a 14-play, 95-yard scoring drive that took more than seven minutes off the clock, mostly on the ground. Jones and his colleagues up front were opening holes for third-year running back Miyan Williams to pick up gains in chunks.

"We wanted to run the ball," Jones said. "We were telling coach to run the ball, let's make it happen. We know they're a very good team, their defense is very strong, and we just feel like that was the only option that was best for us."

The only plays Jones sat out in the contest were on that drive. He watched from the sideline as Williams plunged into the endzone from two yards out with fourth-year Enokk Vimahi in at right guard.

"I really wanted to be in there (for that play)," Jones said. "I tried to fight through it as much as I could, I knew we were going tempo and I was like, 'Ah, I gotta catch my breath.' I came out and it was hard for me to actually breathe. But I feel better now."

Jones' services are needed going forward.

While Vimahi waits in the wings again if the Buckeyes were without him for any reason, third-year center Luke Wypler has been dealing with some injury concerns and if he isn't able to go, Jones could slot in at the snapping position, where he was recruited out of high school.

"I feel confident no matter where I go," Jones said. "Left, right guard, center, I feel confident wherever."