

Meechie Johnson Jr. Approaching Return For OSU



Ohio State has still yet to play a game at full strength this season and won't until winger Justice Sueing and forward Seth Towns return from long-term injuries, but the Buckeyes appear to be nearing the return for another play who has been unavailable in recent weeks. Sophomore point guard Meechie Johnson Jr. is slated to return as soon as this week according to head coach Chris Holtmann, who broke down the guard's injury timeline on Jan. 24.

Holtmann explained that Johnson is beginning to work back into practice after he suffered a facial fracture in practice prior to Ohio State's Jan. 16 matchup with Penn State. However, he has yet to practice in a contact situation, which is the next barrier between Johnson and his return to the court.

"I think contact is the next step for him, because he had a facial fracture - which sounds unpleasant, and it was unpleasant for him - and we missed him while he was out," Holtmann said. "He also had a concussion along with the facial fracture. We'll get the final word here (Jan. 24) on what he's able to do."

Ohio State will meet with the media next on Jan. 26 at which point more information on Johnson's potential return against either Minnesota on Jan. 27 or Purdue on Jan. 30 will be revealed. Regardless of what Ohio State's medical team decides, Johnson will be playing with a mask for the foreseeable future.

"He is gonna wear a mask, and he looks like a villain," Holtmann said. "I like it, it gives him a nastiness to him. He's got the whole thing on, it's an interesting thing that he's gotta wear. I think it affects his breathing as much as anything, but we haven't had a chance to really play and get up and down enough to see how it's gonna affect his vision."

In Johnson's place, Ohio State has turned to former players to find practice bodies, working former guard Keyshawn Woods into the fold in recent days.

“We’ve had some guys that have had some ailments and been down for various reasons. We’ve been blessed, we have a former Buckeye - always a Buckeye - Keyshawn Woods who’s been practicing with our group to help us with some numbers here,” Holtmann said. “He’s allowed, I think per compliance, 10 practice days. People who have watched us recently know Keyshawn played great towards the end of his tenure here.”